

DARKCHYLDTM





DARKCHYLDE™

Creator, Writer, and Penciler:
Randy Queen

POETRY

Writer: Ariel Chylde
Colors: Sarah Queen

LEGACY

Colors: Jimmy Yu
Inks: Jason Gorder
Letters: Steve Dutro
Issue # 3 Penciler: Ron Adrian
Additional Pencils: Ed Benes
Additional colors: Brett Evans, Ben Sinclair

REDEMPTION

Colors: Brett Evans
Inks, Letters, : Sarah Queen
Ink Assist: Victor Llamas

Front and Back Cover Colors, Book
Design, and Production: Sarah Queen

Additional Design: Randy Queen

Special thanks to Eric Stephenson
and everyone at Image Comics.

Dedicated to the fans of Ariel Chylde.
You know who you are.

For
Darkchylde
Entertainment



Randy Queen & Sarah Queen

For
Image Comics



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WELCOME TO HER NIGHTMARE: PART 2

Like the various creatures Ariel Chylde can become from her many nightmares, perhaps fittingly, this will be something of an eclectic collection. We'll kick things off with new and rarely seen imagery paired with select choices of Ariel's poetic writings. From there we'll move into the sequential stories, beginning with *Legacy*, the follow up to *The Descent Vol. 1*, which was Ariel's introductory story arc (and still in print if you'd like to start at the beginning). *Legacy* was originally intended to be a one long, epic journey, but out of necessity was broken into two larger chapters, the second of which is *Redemption*. To date, these works have yet to be collected for American audiences.

Looking back on these tales, I see a representation of a necessary learning curve, a snapshot of memories, places, and moments. Like seeing an old haircut, there are things I'd approach differently with the benefit of hindsight, sure. But sometimes beauty can be found in what some may perceive as imperfection. It means a great deal that Ariel has been embraced by so many fans around the world, and I cannot thank you enough. I'm grateful to have worked with many talented artists over the years, and hope you'll enjoy these little pieces of time.

Kindest regards,

~R



CATALYST

what becomes real
to a mind become adrift
what becomes the hand
to the falling sands that sift
drift in motion, and from source
easy despair as I lose course
from tired eyes there burns a tear
ignites this cauldron of my fear
and though it causes mind and heart to ache,
I see where I lay dreaming,
and dreamt I was awake
Is it a lie I hide behind
or a truth that shows the way





SPIDER at SUNSET

Round and round, and round you run
like the moon, and sister sun
all things end and come undone
but before the fall you will have won
that hard fought thing for which you spun

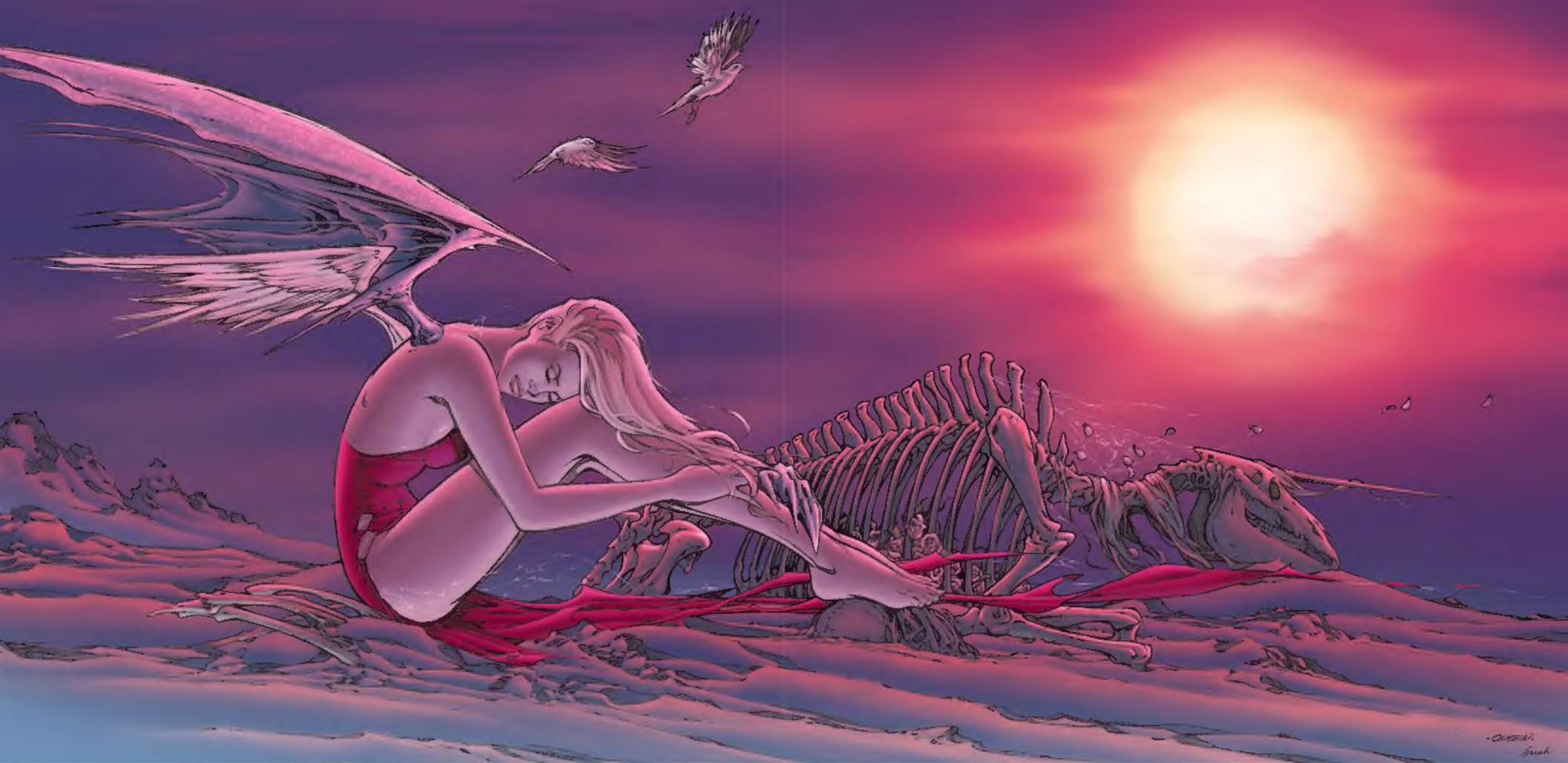
up is down, then back again
your canvas is your silken spin
living only to weave and create
now you sit, anticipate
as shadows lengthen
and I hope you win
even as you circle again

swift little spider, and a setting sun
hard fought game, and seldom won
this artists orb, so dimly lit
as center of your tapestry sit
softened horizon, surrenders red
yet stops to ponder things it said

swift little spider, now you wait
sit in quiet, contemplate
opportunities they flutter few
yet even now, some fly for you
so circle again, this time higher
round and round, goes swift little spider







UNICORNS

Only one of me
One born to be
resigned, and fading fast
beautiful bloom, colors fade too soon
Only one of me
One sun to see
One moon to be
above as I hold on
to uncertainty
the only friend that stays...
save hope.

WAKING

Deep wild
how I run
where even shadows
fear to roam
where moonlight
is silver memory
having flown so far from home
still the darkness whispers
and sings its song for me
surrender and be free
I dare not now decide
dare not allow myself to
keep dreaming I'm alive
here where I ran away to feel
this soul in pain, I had to steal
to this place where I could heal
In nightmare, fled from anguish
hid away, where I did languish
and though my wings are sore
and tired bones now ache to core
I must wake and fly to shore
to glimpse at heaven just once more



DARCYVIOLE

THE LEGACY



TICKETS

QUEEN

GORDER

Jimmy



RELISH THIS DAY, PEOPLE,
FOR IT WAS PAID FOR WITH
MUCH TOIL, STRIFE, PERSISTENCE,
AND LET US NOT FORGET...

"...HARD WORK.

"AND I MUST SAY, I'M
GENUINELY THRILLED TO
SEE YOU ALL FINALLY
MADE IT.

"WELL, MOST OF
YOU, ANYWAY!

(NERVOUS LAUGHTER)

"AND THOUGH I HAVE TO
CONFESS, IT PAINS ME
TO SEE SOME OF YOU
ON YOUR WAY..."

"...OTHERS, I'LL ADMIT
QUITE CANDIDLY, I'M
DELIGHTED TO SEE GO!"

(LAUGHTER)

AND PEOPLE,
PLEASE..

"DON'T BE FOOLED
BY THE LANDSCAPE
YOU NOW SEE DRAPED
BEFORE YOU..

"THIS IS NOT THE END
OF YOUR JOURNEY
NOT BY A LONG SHOT
YOU DO NOT GET TO
PASS GO, YOU DO
NOT GET TO COLLECT
THE HUNDRED DOLLARS
AND THERE IS NO POT
OF GOLD AT THE END
OF THIS RAINBOW..

BUTHER YOU MUST
TAKE IN ALL THAT HAS
GONE BEFORE..

"...AND KNOW THAT I HAS
STRENGTHENED YOU, REFINED
YOU.. PREPARED YOU FOR THE
MANY CHALLENGES AND
ADVERSITIES THAT LIE AHEAD.."

9



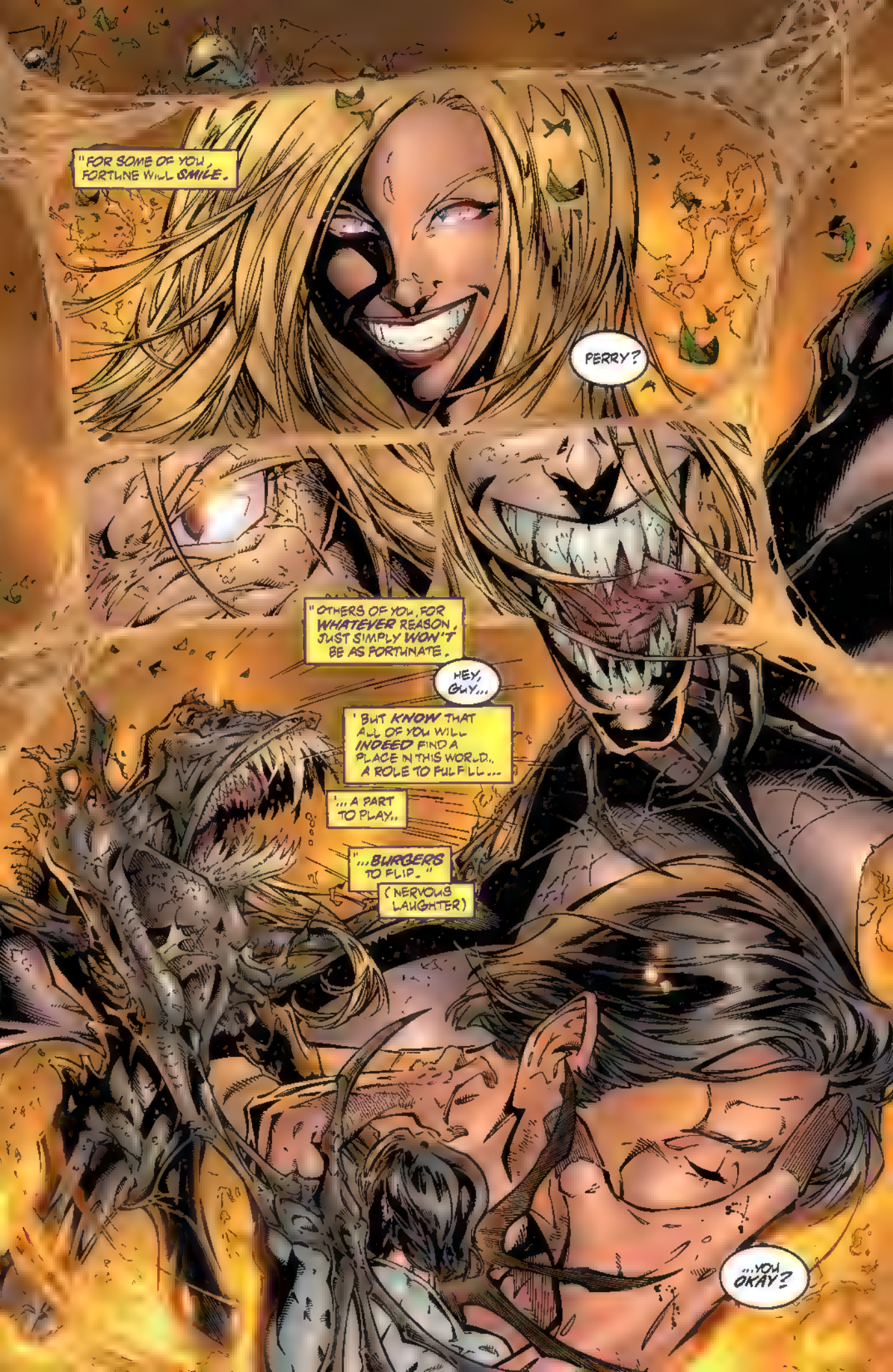
"... AND I PROMISE YOU, MY
FRIENDS, THE ADVERSITIES
WILL BE MANY."

"THE CHALLENGES..."

"...WILL BE
MANY."

' AND THE
PENALTY FOR
FAILURE...'

"...FAR, FAR
MORE SEVERE."



"FOR SOME OF YOU
FORTUNE WILL SMILE."

PERRY?

"OTHERS OF YOU, FOR
WHATEVER REASON,
JUST SIMPLY WON'T
BE AS FORTUNATE."

HEY,
GUY...

"BUT KNOW THAT
ALL OF YOU WILL
INDEED FIND A
PLACE IN THIS WORLD...
A ROLE TO FULFILL..."

"...A PART
TO PLAY..."

"...BURGERS
TO FLIP..."

(NERVOUS
LAUGHTER)

...YOU
OKAY?



MUM???

YEAH
YEAH I'M
FINE...



I'M
OKAY.

UNDER
THE CIRCUM-
STANCES

SHE'S
AM...

SHE'S
HAUNTING
ME, MAN.

THAT'S
UNDERSTANDABLE.
GUY, IT'S NATURAL.
BUT PERRY...



.. THIS IS A
BIG DAY. ONE YOU
ALMOST MISSED YOUR-
SELF. I MEAN, HELLO, MAN,
TAKE A LOOK AROUND YOU...
WE'RE GRADUATING
TODAY!!! YOUR DAD...
HE WOULD WANT YOU
TO ENJOY THIS.

AND IF...
ARIEL WERE HERE,
WELL, SHE'D WANT
YOU TO ENJOY
IT, TOO.



THAT'S
JUST IT, MAN.
AS MUCH AS I TRY
AS MUCH AS I WANT
TO, I CAN'T HATE
HER FOR WHAT
HAPPENED. I CAN'T
BLAME HER.

I JUST
CAN'T.

AND,
WEIRDLY
ENOUGH, I
MISS
HER.

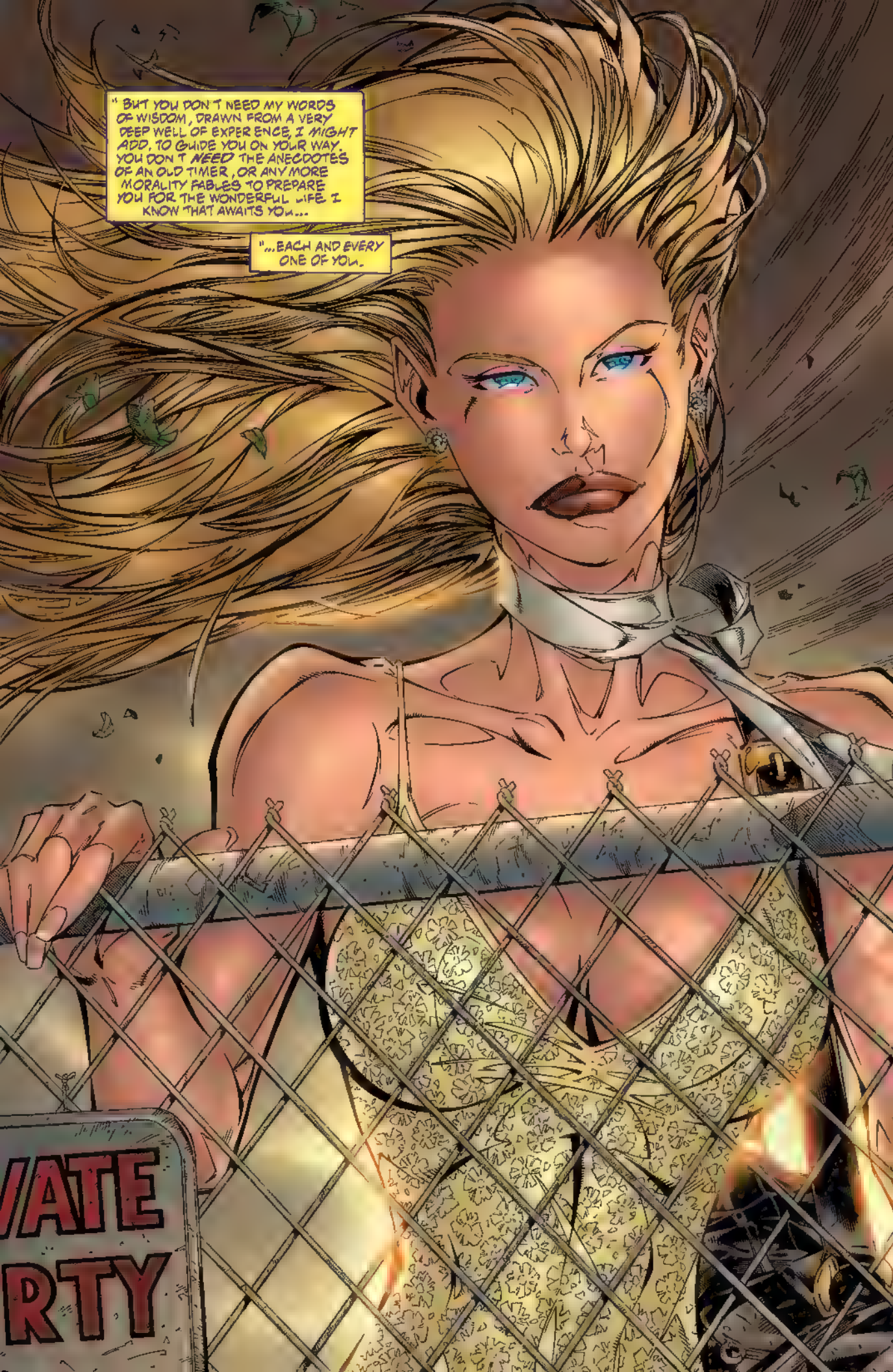
AND AS
MUCH AS I'D
LOVE TO
DENY IT...

...I CAN'T
HELP BUT WISH
SHE WAS STILL
AROUND.

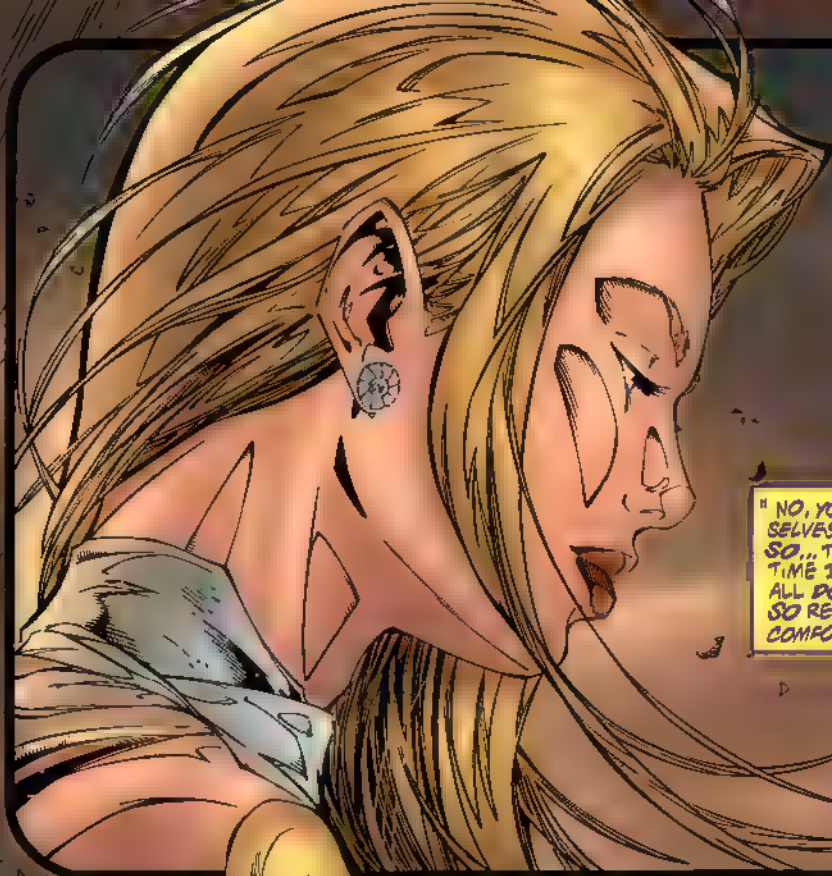


"BUT YOU DON'T NEED MY WORDS
OF WISDOM, DRAWN FROM A VERY
DEEP WELL OF EXPERIENCE, I MIGHT
ADD, TO GUIDE YOU ON YOUR WAY.
YOU DON'T NEED THE ANECDOTES
OF AN OLD TIMER, OR ANY MORE
MORALITY FABLES TO PREPARE
YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL LIFE I
KNOW THAT AWAITS YOU...

"...EACH AND EVERY
ONE OF YOU."

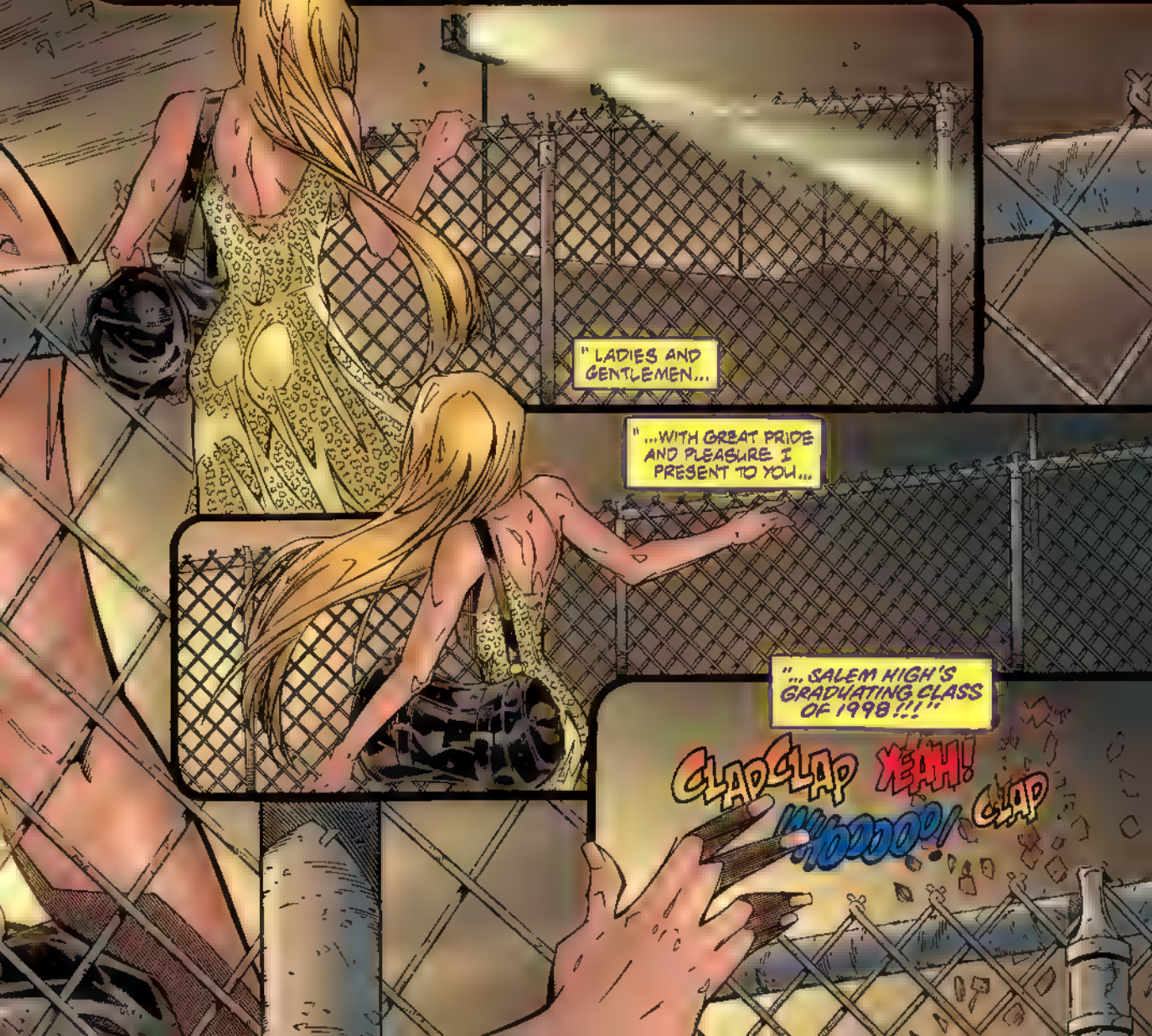


PRIVATE
PARTY



"NO, YOU'VE BEEN PREPARING YOURSELVES FOR THE LAST TWELVE YEARS. SO... THAT BEING SAID, I THINK IT'S TIME I SHUT UP NOW, AND LET YOU ALL DO WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING SO RESTLESSLY IN THOSE UNCOMFORTABLE FOLDING CHAIRS TO DO."

"WOULD YOU PLEASE JOIN ME NOW IN THE SYMBOLIC TURNING OF YOUR TASSELS..."



"LADIES AND GENTLEMEN..."

"...WITH GREAT PRIDE AND PLEASURE I PRESENT TO YOU..."

"...SALEM HIGH'S GRADUATING CLASS OF 1998!!!"

CLAP CLAP YEHH!
WOOOOO! CLAP

THERE ARE TIMES,
EVE FOUND,

WHEN YOU SIMPLY
JUST HAVE TO ACCEPT
THE WAY THINGS ARE.

IT'S NOT A
MATTER OF

IT'S A
MATTER OF

HIGH
CONGRATULATIONS
CLASS
OF 1998
YOU DID IT!

SOME
KNOW

HOW COME I'M
STILL HAVING SO
MUCH TROUBLE
DOING

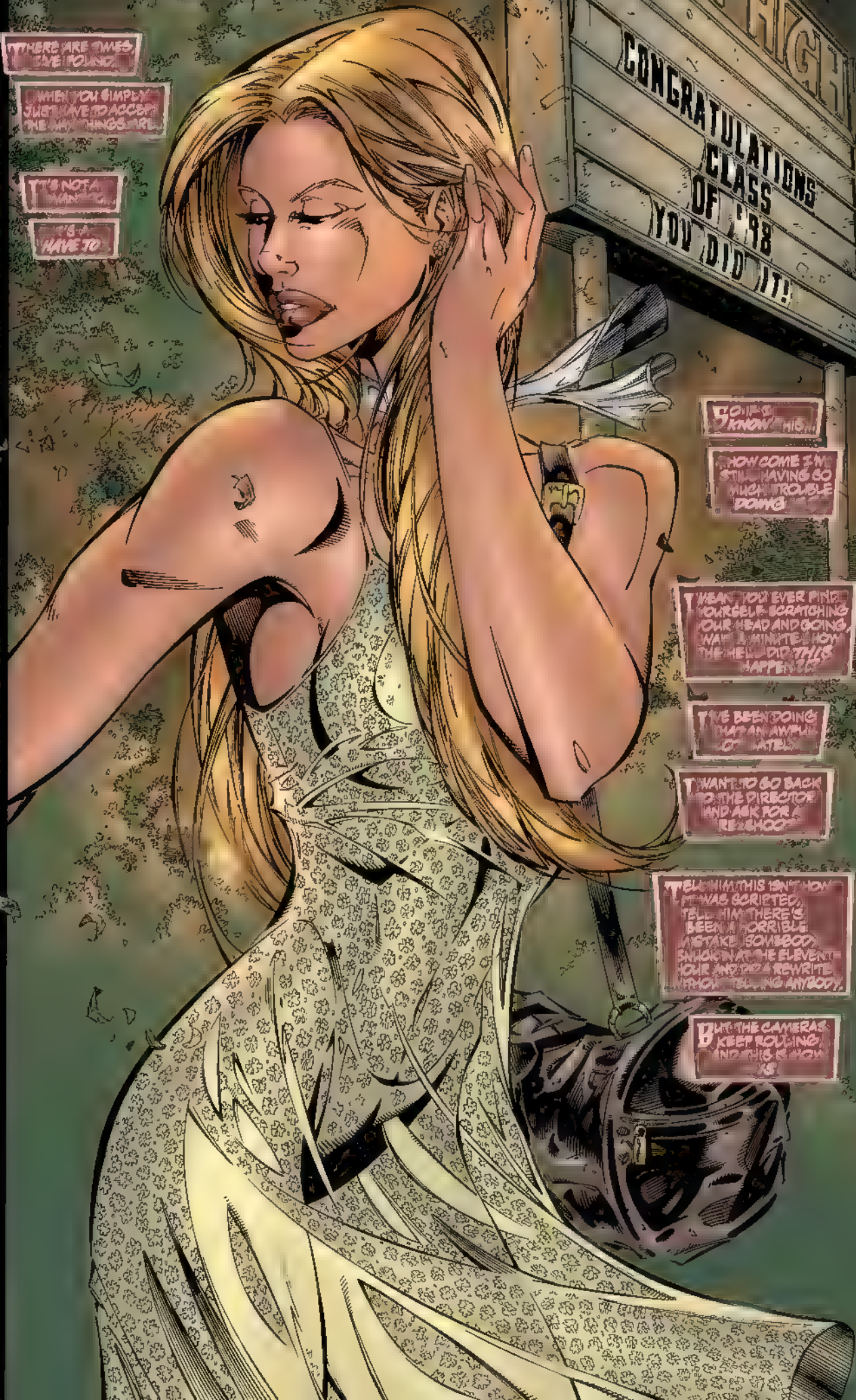
I MEAN YOU EVER FIND
YOURSELF SCRATCHING
YOUR HEAD AND GOING
WAF A MINUTE HOW
THE HELL DID THIS
HAPPEN TO

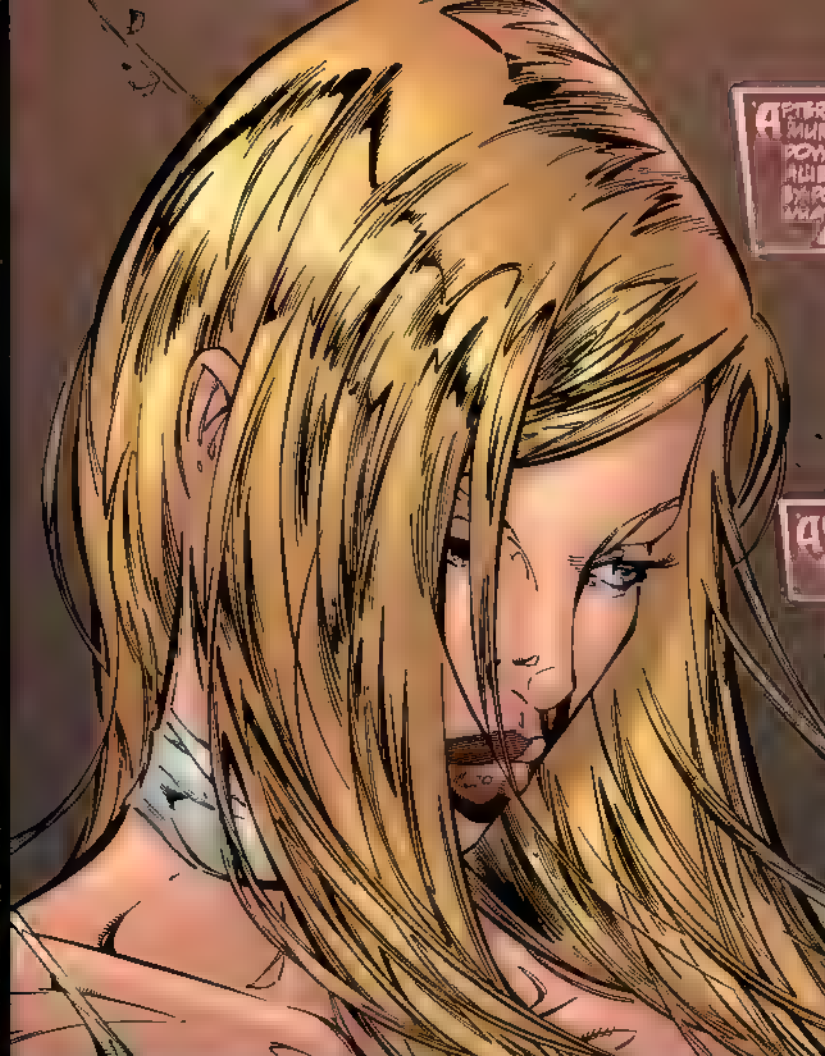
I'VE BEEN DOING
THAT AN AWFULL
LOT LATELY

I WANT TO GO BACK
TO THE DIRECTOR
AND ASK FOR A
RE-DO

TELL HIM THIS ISN'T HOW
IT WAS SCRIPTED,
TELL HIM THERE'S
BEEN A HORRIBLE
MISTAKE SOMEBODY
SMUG IN AT THE ELEVENTH
HOUR AND DO A REWRITE
WITHOUT TELLING ANYBODY.

BUT THE CAMERAS
KEEP ROLLING
AND THIS IS HOW
IT IS





AFTER ALL, WHEN YOU'VE BASICALLY
MURDERED YOUR FATHER, BURNED
DOWN HALF YOUR TOWN, AND
ALIENATED YOUR ROMANTIC INTEREST
BY POLISHING OFF HIS FATHER, TOO,
WHAT REAL CHOICES DO YOU HAVE
BUT TO LEAVE TOWN?

MAYBE I'LL FIND ALL NEW
TOWNS TO TORCH, ALL
NEW, ALL-STAR QUARTER
BACKS TO BREAK MY HEART.

ALL NEW FATHERS
TO BURN.

AND HERE I WAS
THINKING I WAS
A GOOD AND DECENT
PERSON.

I COULD SCREAM OUT
TO THE HEAVENS
WHY??? BUT
REALLY, WHAT GOOD
WOULD THAT BE, BESIDES.

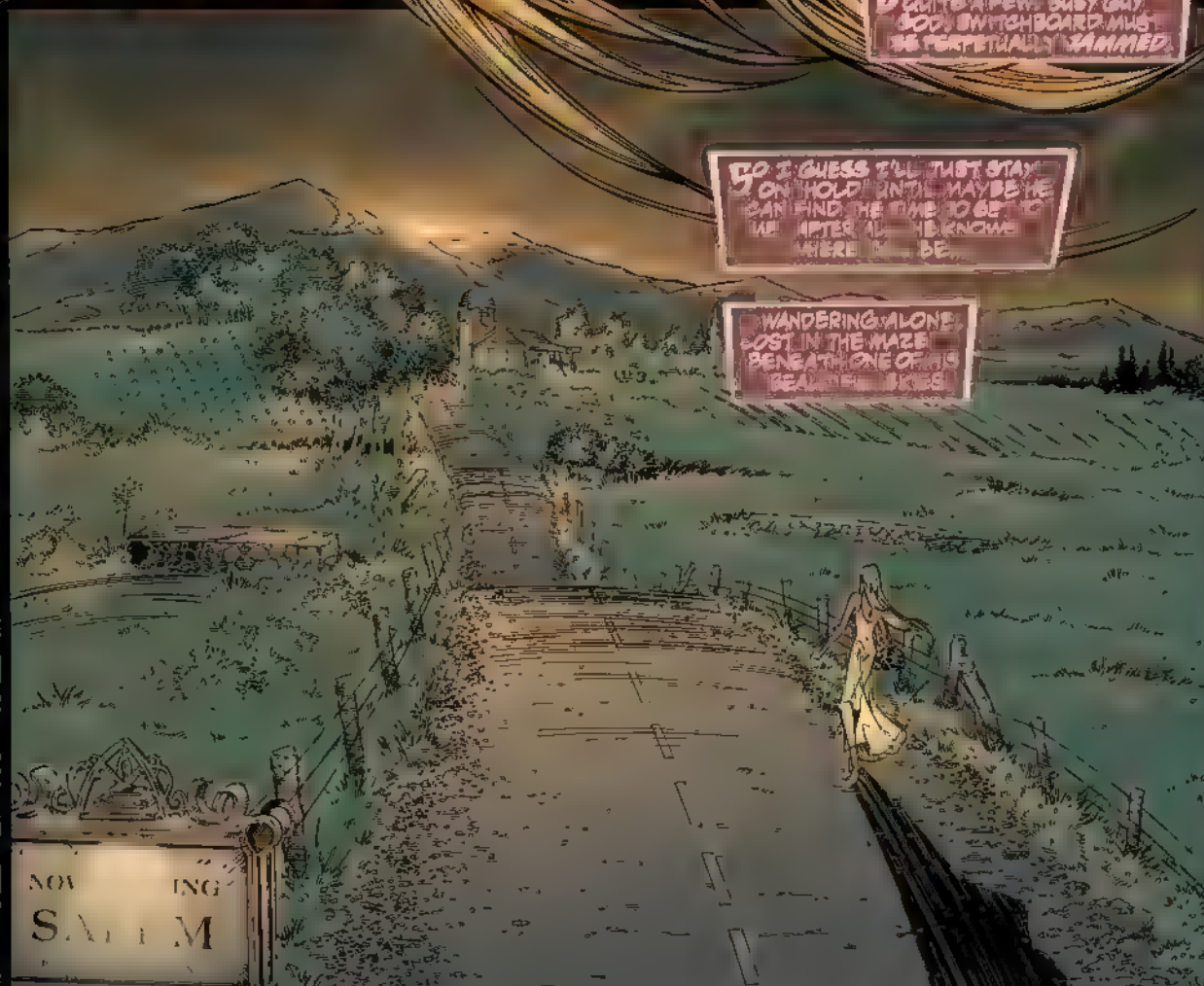
I'VE TRIED THAT
ALREADY.

AND GOD HASN'T, AS
OF YET, BEEN TAKING
ANY OF MY CALLS.

BUT I IMAGINE HE GETS
QUITE A FEW BUSY GUY,
GOD SWITCHBOARD MUST
BE PERPETUALLY JAMMED.

DO I GUESS I'LL JUST STAY
ON HOLD? UNTIL MAYBE HE
CAN FIND THE TIME TO GET TO
ME. AFTER ALL, HE KNOWS
WHERE I'M BE.

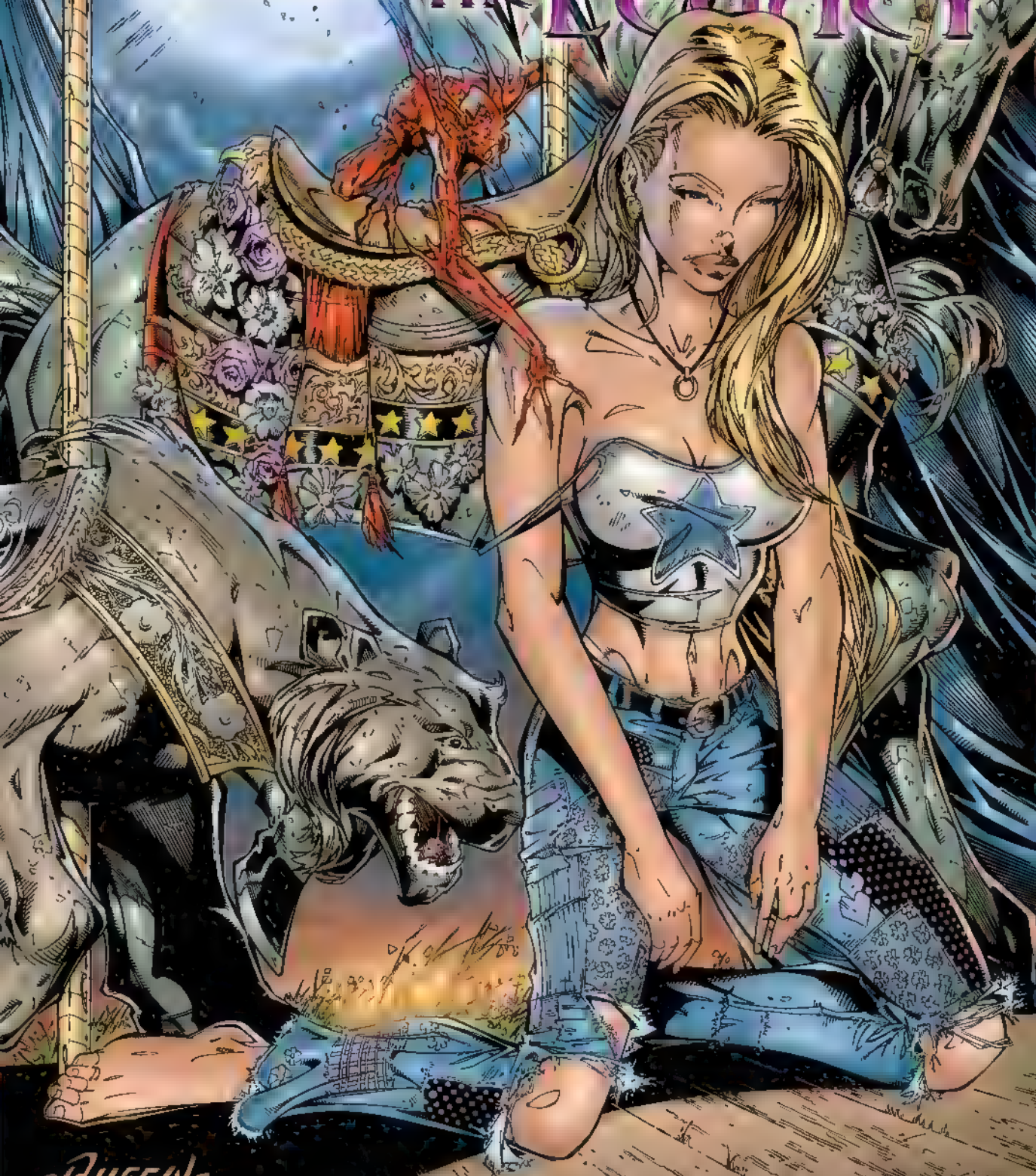
WANDERING ALONE,
LOST IN THE MAZE
BENEATH ONE OF HIS
REAL ESTATE SKIES.



NOV 1997
SALT M

DARKCHYLD

THE LEGACY



QUEEN-
98 GORDON

THE WOODS, JUST SOUTH OF SALEM...
THE MOON HAVING ONLY JUST RECENTLY
RESUMED ITS COMFORTABLE PERCH IN
THE JUST-BORN NIGHT TIME SKY...

OOHHOOHHH...

I'M
MISERABLE,
ALL RIGHT?

I'M... I'M
GONNA FIX THAT
LITTLE GIRL FOR
GOOD, WHAT I'M
GONNA DO... IT'S
GONNA BE SOOO...
SWEET...

FIRST, I'M
GONNA...
OWN!

DAMN
STINKY FLYING
MAGGOT! GET
AWAY FROM
ME!

I
THINK
I'M
GONNA...

...CHOP
OFF HER HEAD
THEN, I THINK
I'LL... UH...

I THINK
I'LL FRENCH KISS
HER DEAD SKULL!
YEAH, YEAHH... HEHE...
THAT'S GOOD...

...I LIKE
THAT ONE.

THEN, UH...
I'M GONNA CHEW
ON HER LITTLE
PRETTY PAINTED
TOES JUST LIKE
BEEF JERKEY!

SHE'LL, UH...
...BURP! BE SORRY...
OH YEAH, RUE
THE DAY,
SHE WILL...

I'LL
SHOW HER
A THING OR
TWO... TEACH
THAT LITTLE
MINKIE A
LESSON...

...MAKE
HER HURT
LIKE I'M
HURTIN'...
SHE'LL PAY...

OH,
YES...

...JUST AS
SOON AS I GET
OUT FROM
UNDER THIS
GODDAMN
TREE!

WELL,
WELL,
WELL...

SWAP

"WOULD
YOU JUST LOOK
AT WHAT WE HAVE
HERE, PIECE!
IT'S YOUR BEST
FRIEND!"

LYING
DOWN ON
THE JOB
BAGGIM!

HELP YOU?
ARE YOU OUT OF YOUR
MIND?? YOU'RE
HELP THE REBBON
WE'RE EVEN IN THIS
MESS!!

LET ME
KICK HIM IN
THE FACE?

SIGH.
MAKE IT
QUICK.

UGH!

I HOPE
YOU ROT UNDER
THERE YOU LITTLE
CREEP!!

I HATE
YOU!!

I'm
GOOD OHMM
I'm KILL
YOU BOTH!
ALLRIGHT?

YOU'RE
NOT GOING TO
MURKIN!
BE MY
BOY!

EXCEPT
STAY UNDER
THERE AND DIE,
JUST LIKE YOU
DESERVE
TO!

OKAY,
LET'S GO.

YOU FEEL
BETTER?

HEH
DEMM
SKIPPY!

YEAH

...AND HERE I WAS
WORRYING MY ENTIRE
LIFE WOULD PASS ME BY
AND I'D NEVER KNOW THE
PLEASURE OF SEEING THAT
SUNKY, ANNOYING, LOUDMOUTH
LITTLE BASTARD TRAPPED
UNDER A TREE!! NOW I
CAN BE HAPPY COLOR
ME FAR WED. LIFE JUST
KEEPS GETTING BETTER.

YOU
GOT WHAT
YOU DESERVED.
YOU COCKY LITTLE
JERK OFF! YOU
HEAR ME? NOT
SO HIGH AND TIGHTLY
NOW, ARE YOU?

NOW
THAT YOU'RE
DONE "TRADING
BARBS WITH YOU
PLEASE... JUST."

"HELP,
ME?!"

HONESTLY,

THE LAST THING I
WANT YOU TO DO IS
BREAK OUT THE TO
FOR TOGS

BUT I WILL SAY THIS TO BET
MONEY ON THE FACT THAT I
SWAIRE DINES AND I SAT
DOWN TO COMFARE OUR
CALLED YES THAT LITTLE
GIRL WOULD GET HER ASS KICKED

HER CHARACTER HAD
NIGHTMARES
BECOME MINE AND
MINE WANDS DOWN

BUT TIME MARCHES ON
AND EVERYTHING I'VE
EVER KNOWN IS MILES
BEHIND ME THE WINDS
OF CHANGE BLOW AND
OF THE LAND
O' REDEAL

IN SPITE OF
OURSELF

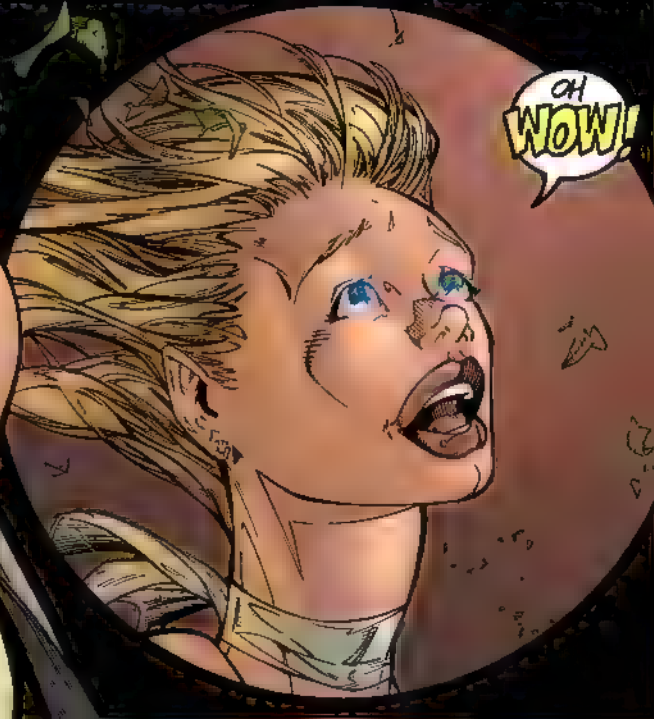
I'M SO SICK OF HEARING MY
OWN VOICE RATTLE AROUND
INSIDE MY HEAD, SCRAMBLING
TO MAKE SENSE WHERE NONE
CAN EVER HOPE TO BE FOUND

MY FEET HURT
AND I'M TIRED
OF THINKING

TIRED OF TRYING TO
RATIONALIZE TIRED OF
TRYING TO PAINT THE SK
BLUE WHEN IT FEELS TO
BE MUCH HAPPIER AS A
WASHED OUT END OF GREY

I'M TIRED
OF

OH
WOW!



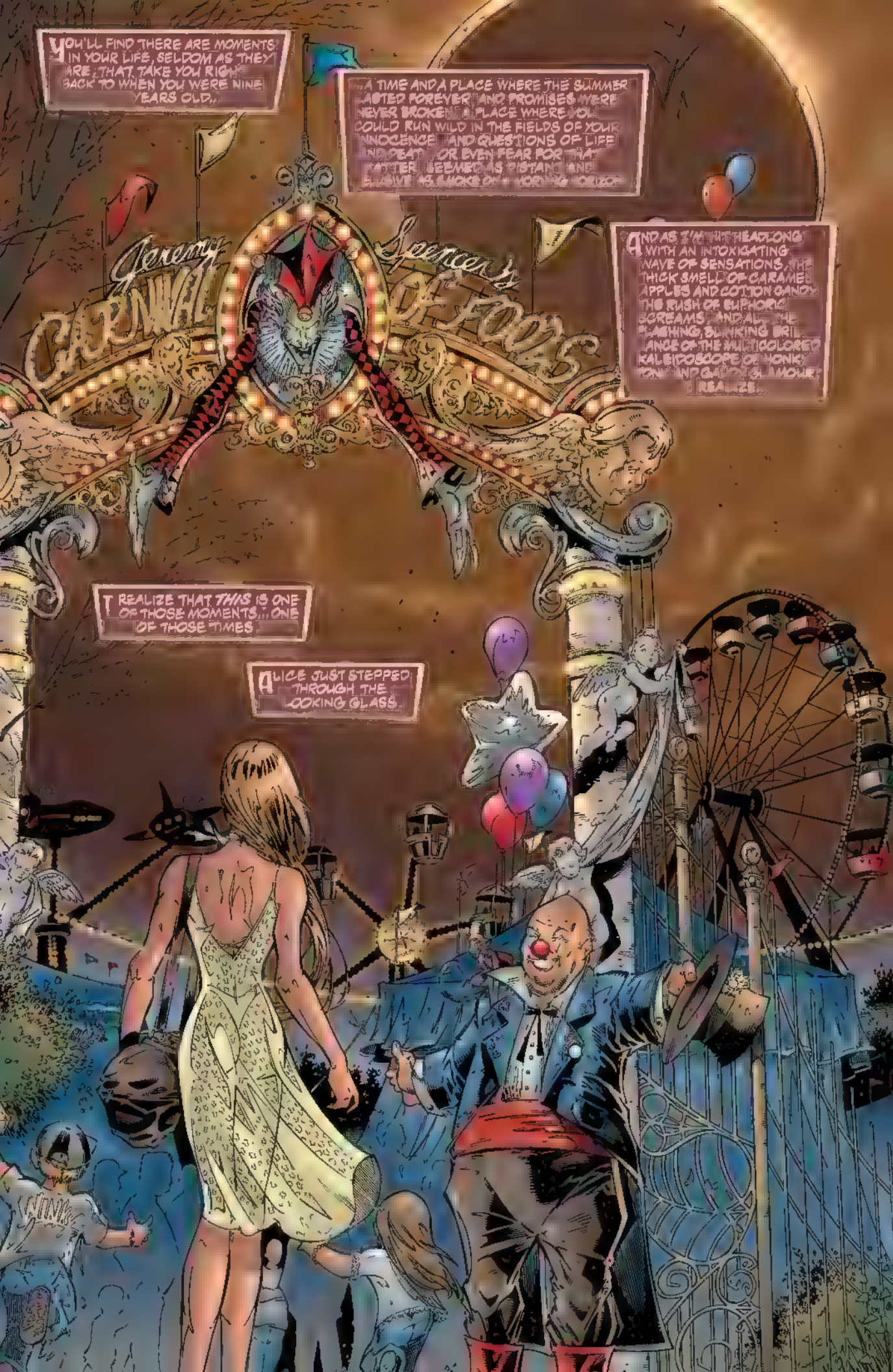
YOU'LL FIND THERE ARE MOMENTS
IN YOUR LIFE, SELDOM AS THEY
ARE, THAT TAKE YOU RIGHT
BACK TO WHEN YOU WERE NINE
YEARS OLD.

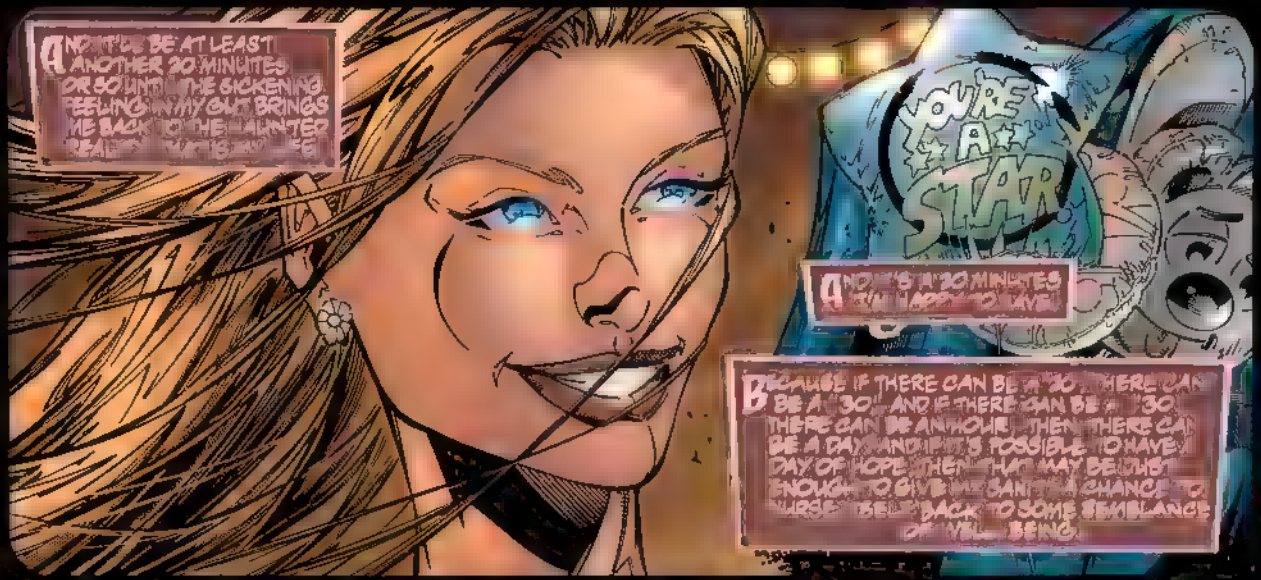
A TIME AND A PLACE WHERE THE SUMMER
LASTED FOREVER AND PROMISES WERE
NEVER BROKEN. A PLACE WHERE YOU
COULD RUN WILD IN THE FIELDS OF YOUR
INNOCENCE AND QUESTIONS OF LIFE
AND DEATH OR EVEN FEAR FOR THAT
MATTER SEEMED AS DISTANT AND
ELUSIVE AS SMOKE ON A MORNING HORIZON.

AND AS I'M HEADING
WITH AN INTOXICATING
WAVE OF SENSATIONS, THE
THICK SMELL OF CARAMEL
APPLES AND COTTON CANDY,
THE RUSH OF EUPHORIA
SCREAMS, AND ALL THE
FLASHING, BLINKING BRI-
LANCE OF THE MULTICOLORED
KALEIDOSCOPE OF HONK-
Y-TON AND GAYD'S GLAMOUR,
I REALIZE.

I REALIZE THAT THIS IS ONE
OF THOSE MOMENTS... ONE
OF THOSE TIMES.

ALICE JUST STEPPED
THROUGH THE
LOOKING GLASS.



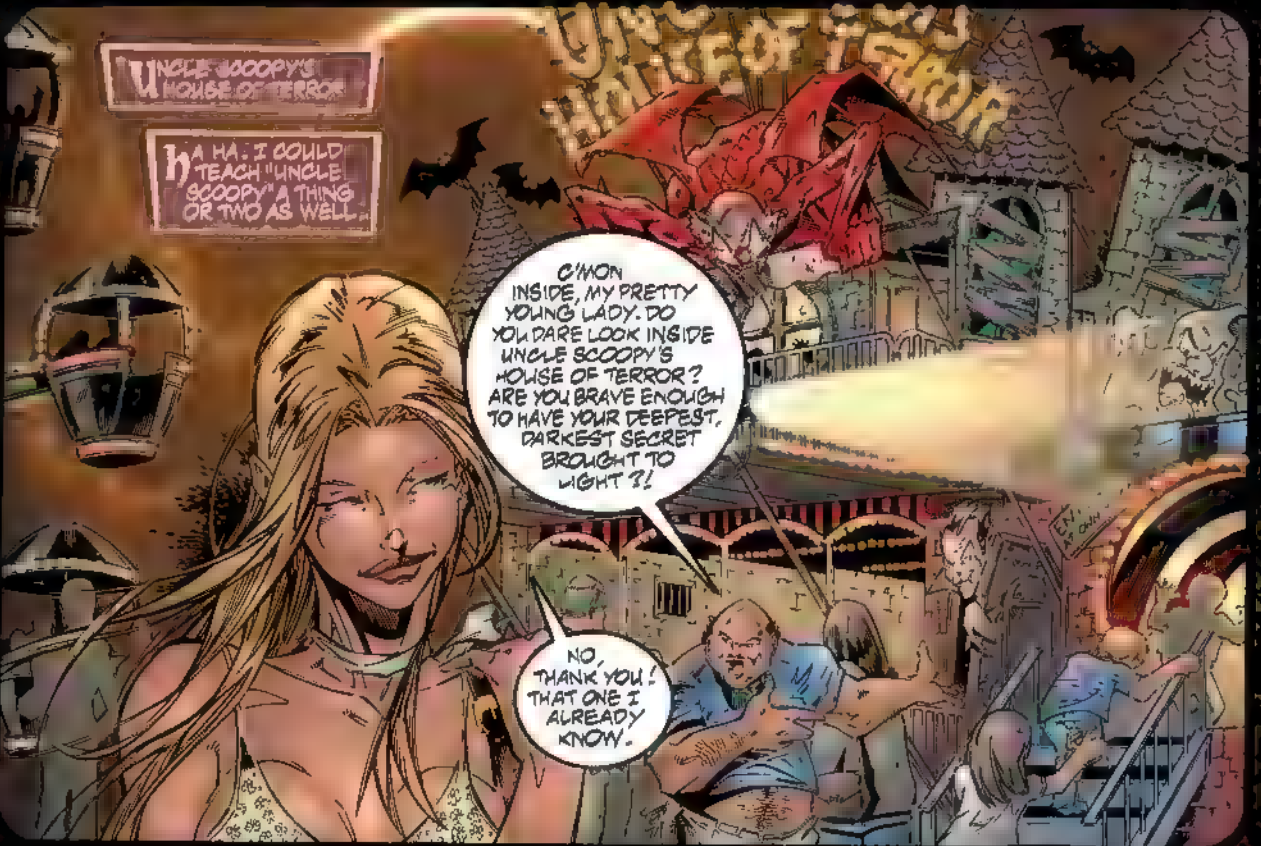


AND IT'S A 20 MINUTES I'M HAPPY TO LIVE!
BECAUSE IF THERE CAN BE A 20, THERE CAN BE A 30, AND IF THERE CAN BE A 30, THERE CAN BE AN HOUR. THEN THERE CAN BE A DAY, AND IT'S POSSIBLE TO HAVE A DAY OF HOPE. THEN THAT MAY BE JUST ENOUGH TO GIVE ME A CHANCE TO SURGE, BE BACK TO SOME semblance OF MY BEING.



MAYBE I COULD EVEN GET A JOB HERE AS THE 'DUCK GIRL'. MY NAME IS ARIEL. IF YOU OSS ME OFF BAD ENOUGH, I'LL TORCH YOUR SORRY ASS. EVEN FOR NOW, WOULD YOU CARE TO TRY YOUR HAND AT PICKING A 'JOB' DUCK? IT'S ONLY TWO TICKETS, AND EVERY DUCK'S A WINNER.

I'VE I COULD SEE

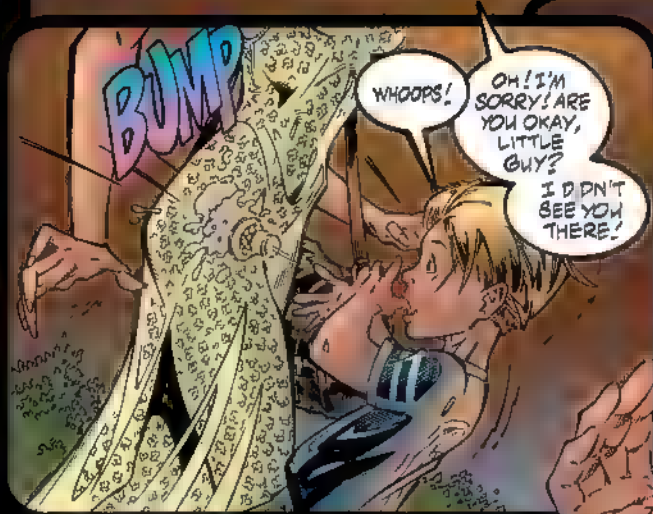


UNCLE SCOOPY'S HOUSE OF TERROR

HA HA. I COULD TEACH 'UNCLE SCOOPY' A THING OR TWO AS WELL.

C'MON INSIDE, MY PRETTY YOUNG LADY. DO YOU DARE LOOK INSIDE UNCLE SCOOPY'S HOUSE OF TERROR? ARE YOU BRAVE ENOUGH TO HAVE YOUR DEEPEST, DARKEST SECRET BROUGHT TO LIGHT?!

NO, THANK YOU! THAT ONE I ALREADY KNOW.



WHOOOPS!

OH! I'M SORRY! ARE YOU OKAY, LITTLE GUY?

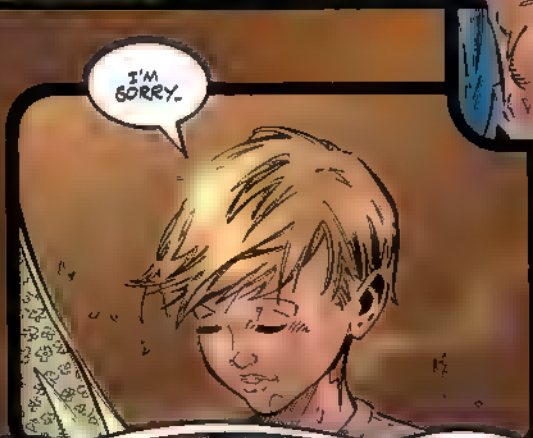
I DIDN'T SEE YOU THERE!



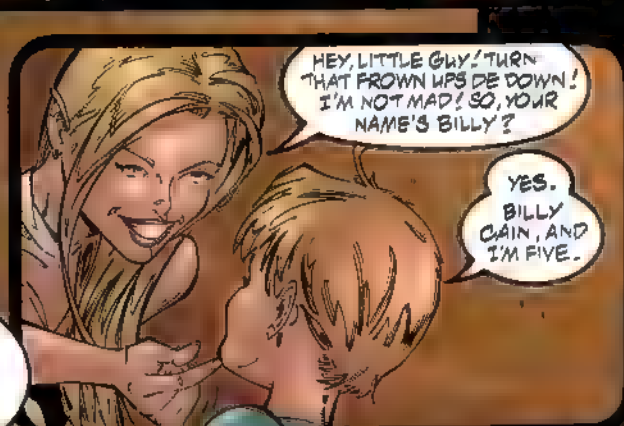
NO NEED TO APOLOGIZE. BILLY JUST GETS A LITTLE TOO EXCITED SOME-TIMES.

AND FROM THE LOOKS OF IT, YOU'RE THE ONE WITH "STRAWBERRY VANILLA" ALL OVER YOU.

LOOKS LIKE HE GOT YA GOOD! WHAT DO YOU SAY, BILLY?

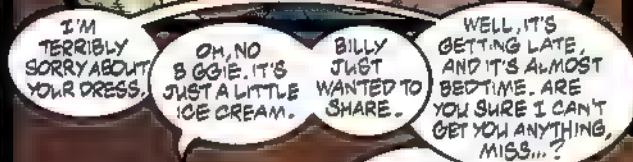


I'M SORRY.



HEY, LITTLE GUY! TURN THAT FROWN UPSIDE DOWN! I'M NOT MAD! SO, YOUR NAME'S BILLY?

YES. BILLY CAIN, AND I'M FIVE.



I'M TERRIBLY SORRY ABOUT YOUR DRESS.

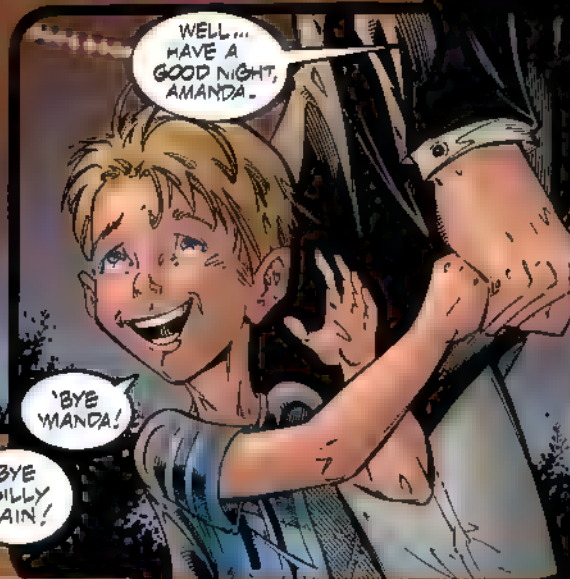
OH, NO BIGGIE. IT'S JUST A LITTLE ICE CREAM.

BILLY JUST WANTED TO SHARE.

WELL, IT'S GETTING LATE, AND IT'S ALMOST BEDTIME. ARE YOU SURE I CAN'T GET YOU ANYTHING, MISS...?



A-AMANDA. AMANDA LE GH. AND NO, IT'S OKAY REALLY. NOTHING A LITTLE WATER WON'T REMEDY.



WELL... HAVE A GOOD NIGHT, AMANDA.

'BYE MANDA!

BYE BILLY CAIN!



A MORTAL SIN THERE.

EVEN MY NAME ISN'T MY OWN ANYMORE.

BILLY'S A LITTLE CUTE, THOUGH.

KIDS, I WONDER IF I'LL EVER EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT'S ALL ABOUT. I HOPE I WILL.

I REALLY HOPE SOMEDAY.

HOURS LATER.

THE CAIN RESIDENCE. ROUGHLY SEVENTEEN MINUTES AFTER THE LAST BEDTIME STORY HAS BEEN TOLD, YOUNG BILLY LIES DREAMING IN HIS BED, EXPLORING BRAVE NEW WORLDS THAT LIVE ONLY BEHIND HIS EYELIDS...

HE WOULD'VE BEEN SAFER, HAD HE STAYED THERE.

Billy...

LITTLE BILLY...

BE VERY QUIET, BILLY. WE WOULDN'T WANT TO WAKE UP MOMMY AND DADDY. THEY'D BE VERY ANGRY. THEY WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND...

OPEN UP THE WINDOW, BILLY. I HAVE A SURPRISE FOR YOU...

...ONE YOU'RE SURE TO ENJOY!



THE FAIRGROUNDS,
LONG AFTER THE
MIDWAY HAS GROWN
SILENT...

I'M SAFE HERE WITH AN UNLUCKY
I SHOULD BE ABLE TO STEAL MY
MOMENTS OF RESTLESS SLEEP
BEFORE MY NIGHTMARE RE-
INTRODUCES THEM

BUT I SHOULD BE MORE PROTECTED AS I AM
FROM ALL THAT IS EVIL BY THIS FROZEN
STAMPEDE OF MYSTICAL AND MAGICAL
BEASTS OF LEGEND, LOCKED FOREVER
THEIR ETERNAL CHARGE, NEVER TO
KNOW IF THEY WERE TO COME

NEVER TO KNOW IF
THEY WERE ABLE
TO SAVE ME MY

IT'S A TRADE, A NICE FEEDING, BEING
GUARDED BY THE THING THAT I LOVED
AS A CHILD, IT IS REAL, SO TOO
MUST BE GOOD, MAYBE THESE BEASTS
ARE MAGIC AND HAVE THEIR KINGDOM
IN THEIR OWN HOUSE, A MISTRESS

AND THEY WILL WATCH OVER ME
AND KEEP ME SAFE FROM HARM
AND THE NIGHTMARE, LET MY
DREAMS BE EVER AGAIN

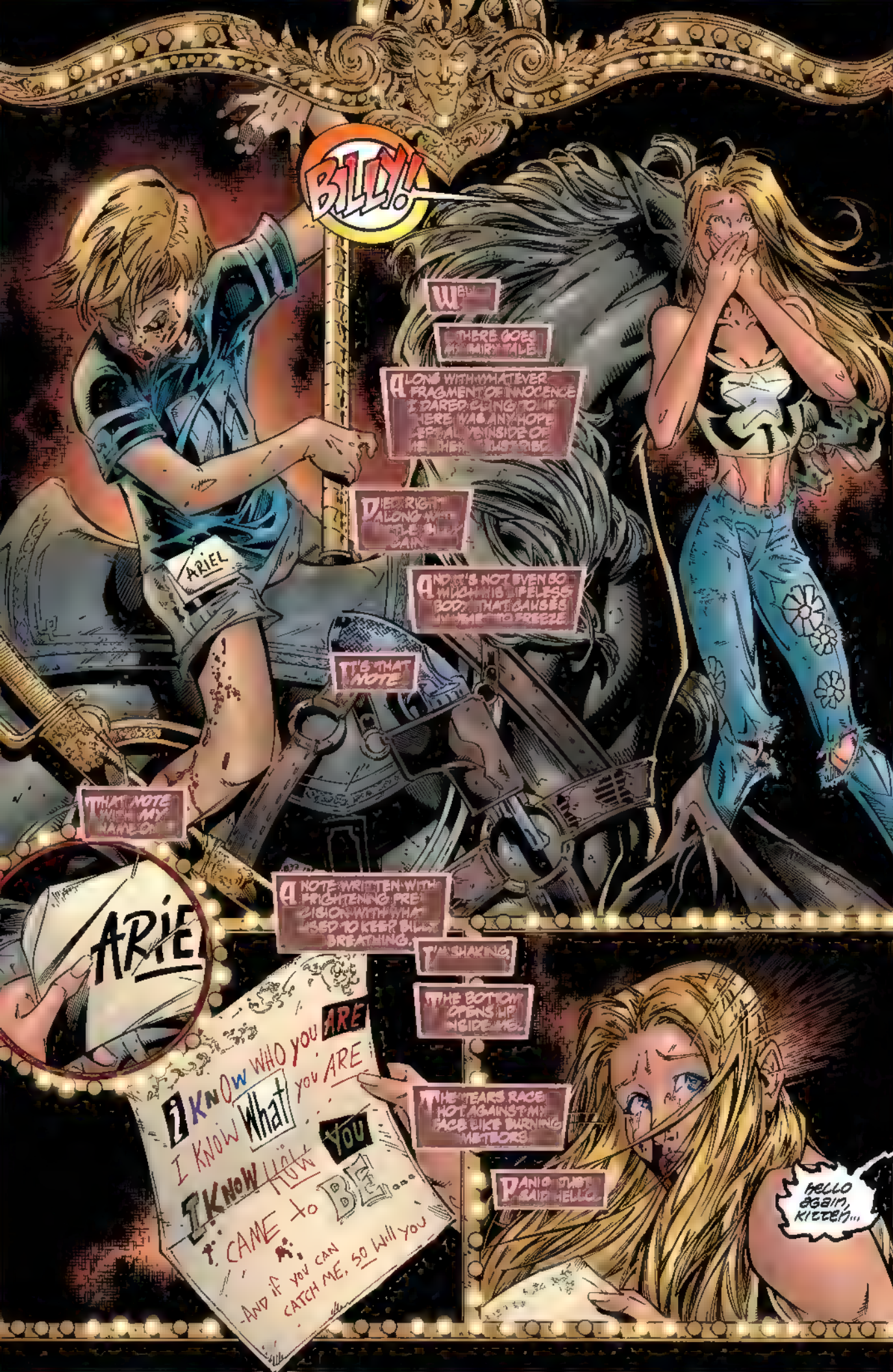
YES

I'M SAFE
HERE

DA!

WHA--??

OH MY
GOD!



BILLY!

WELL

THERE GOES MY FAIRY TALE

A LONG WITH WHATEVER FRAGMENT OF INNOCENCE I DARED BELIEVE TO IF THERE WAS ANY HOPE LEFT ALIVE INSIDE OF ME WHEN I JUST RISE

DIED RIGHT ALONG WITH THE BILLY GAIN

AND IT'S NOT EVEN SO MUCH HIS LIFELESS BODY THAT CAUSES ME TO FREEZE

IT'S THAT NOTE

THAT NOTE WITH MY NAME ON

A NOTE WRITTEN WITH FRIGHTENING PRECISION WITH WHAT USED TO KEEP BILLY BREATHING

I'M SHAKING

THE BOTTOM OPENS UP BEHIND ME

THE TEARS RACE HOT AGAINST MY FACE LIKE BURNING METEORS

PANIC JUST SAID HELLO

HELLO AGAIN, KITTEN...

ARIE

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE
I KNOW HOW YOU CAME TO BE...
AND IF YOU CAN CATCH ME, SO WILL YOU



I GUESS
THIS WOULD BE
THE PART WHERE
THINGS GET
INTERESTING!

TO BE CONTINUED...

DARK HYDOL

LEGACY



1 JEREMY SPENCER'S
CARNIVAL OF FOOLS,
5:01 A.M., JUST 20
SHORT MINUTES EAST
OF SALEM, GEORGIA...

1 THERE'S ONE THING
I CAN SAY ABOUT
PENANCE...

HE'S ALWAYS
CONSISTENT

4 ALWAYS
TENACIOUS

4 AND HE
ALWAYS

4 ALWAYS

4 CUTS RIGHT TO
THE CHASE

4 MAY YOU'VE GOT
ME THAT'S
THREE THINGS

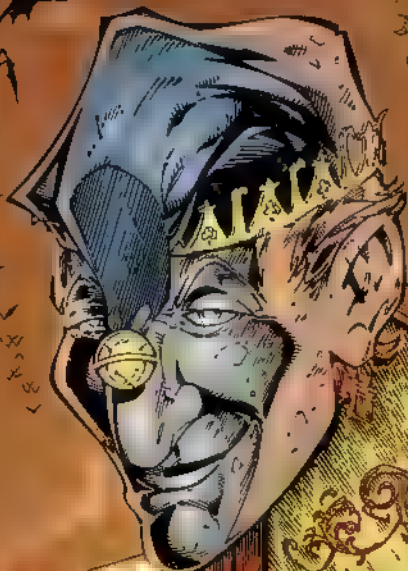
4 BUT THE REASONS
THAT COMPOUND MY
HATRED FOR HIM
ARE REGION

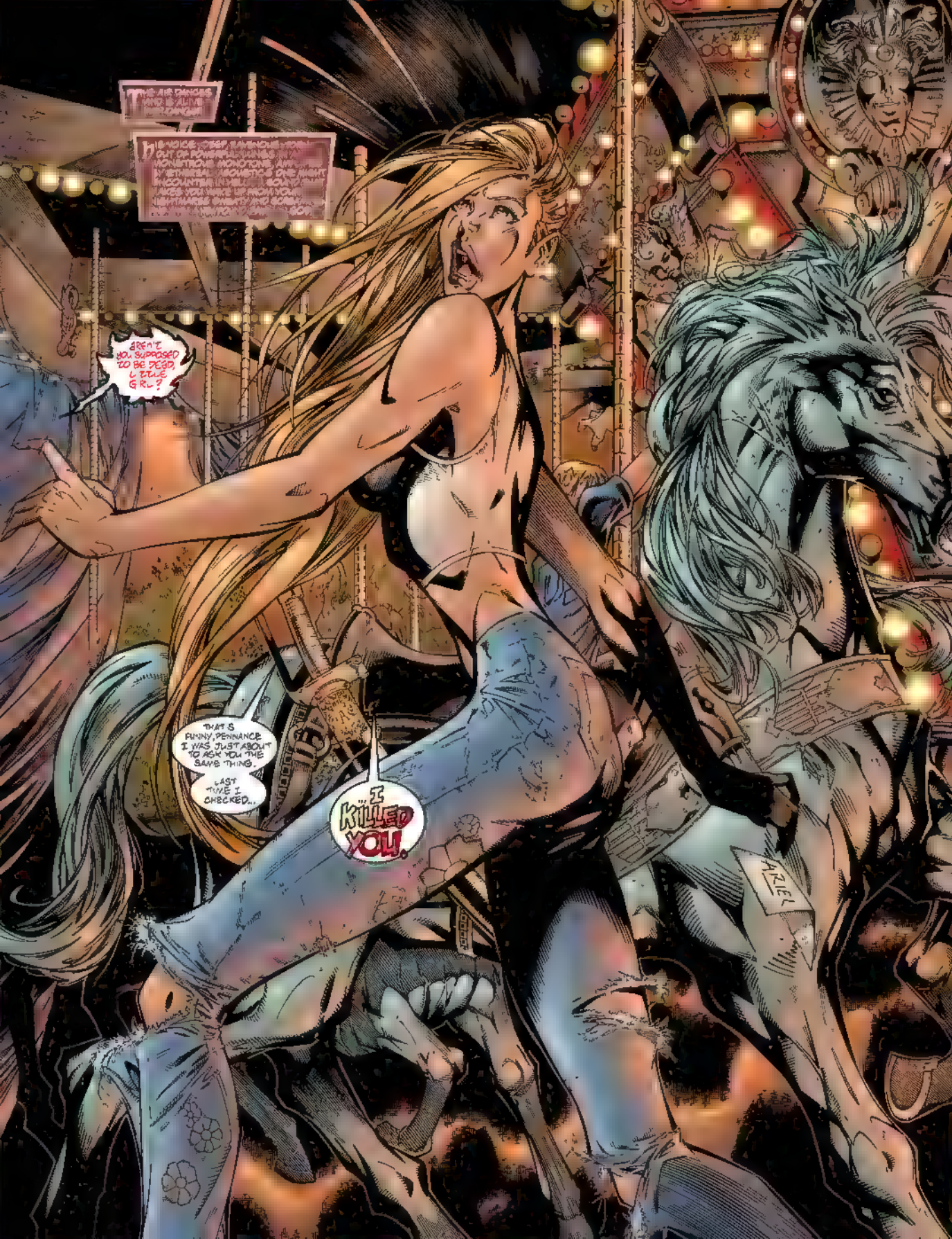
4 IN LAYMAN'S
TERMS

4 I DOUBT I COULD
BE POSSIBLE TO HATE
THE BASTARD MORE

A FREE RIDE

TO HOLDER OF
BRASS RING





HE'S BAITED AND THE BEAST IS
COILED AND READY TO STRIKE.
MAY DRAW OUT WHAT WE BOTH
KNOW TO BE THE EVENTUAL OUT-
COME & HAVE YOUR HANDS ON
COULDN'T HAVE SAID IT
SURE AS HELL THAT HUNTER

A REMINDER OF
MAYHEM WILL
BE COMING TO
THE CITY

HERE
DOES

WHAT
CAN I SAY
BLUE EYES?

NEXT
TIME, DO A
BETTER JOB!

KABRAKT!



my whole left side is on fire. every nerve ending in my back is busy exploring new capacities for pain.

my arm goes numb and doesn't move right.

i'd be a big girl and admit that part of me would love to lay down and just let him finish.

close my eyes and let the end embrace me.

then there's this other part of me. the stubborn part that's just fought too damn hard and lost too damn much to ever truly give up hope that things might one day be better.

the side that wants answers. the side that needs answers.

answers for me.

answers for little billy cain.

guess which side wins out?

that's right. get up. at least make it interesting for me!

oh i'll do more than that. we both know what i'm capable of, monster.

and from the looks of your face...

...i don't think you're that quick to forget!

you make me weak in the knees, baby...

...and for all the right reasons.

keep it up, little girl...

...you're taking me there.

WHAT
EXACTLY
DID YOU HAVE
IN MIND?

MAYBE
PULLING SOME-
THING OUT OF YOUR
H GATEMARES?
SOMETHING LIKE'S
B G AND NASTY
AND SMELLS OF
EVIL...

...SOME-
THING LIKE
ME?!

OR FOW
ABOUT MAYBE
A GATE DRAGON
AND THEN YOU CAN
BURN DOWN HALF
THE TOWN AND MURDER
A FEW MORE
FATHERS!

YOU
COULD EVEN
CROW IN A FEW
MOTHERS TH'S
TIME IN THE INTEREST
OF FAIRNESS!

SHUT UP!

I'VE NEVER
MURDERED ANYONE!
IT'S ALL BEEN YOU!
YOU AND ALL OF
YOUR KIND!

IT'S CALLED
PEMBL,
GODDLOCKS...

...**SUCK
IT UP!**

WACKKKT!

BESIDES
WE BOTH KNOW
YOU DON'T HAVE THE
BALLS TO SUMMON
AGAIN! METAPHORICALLY
SPEAKING, OF
COURSE!

YER
GUN SHY,
GRLIE!

IT'S BEEN THROUGH
MY FACADE

THE BASTARD'S RIGHT! I'M
TERRIFIED TO CHANGE
AGAIN! TERRIFIED TO SEE
ANOTHER ONE OF THEM
FREE FROM THE PLACE
OF BAD DREAMS

HOW'S
PERRY BEEN?
DRESS 'N' 38?!

**far!
far!**

HE'S PUSHING ALL
THE RIGHT EMOTIONAL
BUTTONS.

THE CHANGE HE GETS A SHORT
FIGHT. HE'S DON'T DIE EITHER
WAY. HE COMES OUT ON TOP. GETS
EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS. AND
SOMEHOW HE JUST DON'T THINK
COULD TALK HIM INTO LEAVING
UNTIL I'M BLOODY AND BROKEN
BLOODY AND BROKEN.

JUST LIKE
BILLY.

HE'S HATE A RABBIT. HE
HEADLIGHTS. BATHED IN THE
PARALYSIS OF MY OWN BLOOMING
FEAR AND INDECISION.

GIVE HIM
SECOND.

HE TAKES IT.

THERE IS A LOUD POP. MY
SIDE IS SPRAYED WITH A
MIST OF HOT CRIMSON. AND
THERE'S A BURNING SUPER
NOVA WHERE MY ARM USED
TO BE.

MY HEART FLUTTERS FOR A
SECOND AS WHITE SUNBURSTS
EXPLODE BEHIND MY EYELIDS.
SHOCK RACES THROUGH MY
SYSTEM, CARESSING EVERY
PART OF ME WITH THE URGENCY
OF A RABBIT LOVER.

TONIGHT ARIEL
CHYLDE GOES UNDER!
NOW YOU LIE THERE AND
YOU BLEED TO DEATH.
BLOND E... MOMMA
CAN'T HELP YOU
NOW.

THE BASTARD HAS TO
PUNCTUATE HIS VICTORY
BY HITTING ME WITH MY
OWN RAVAGED MB.

HE'S EVEN MADE REAL. EYEL
GIVEN LIFE AND LEGS AND
I AM THE ONE TO BLAME
AND HE'S SO VERY RIGHT.

SMACK!

IT'S GONG
UNDER

ANDAS RETURNS TO
LEAVE. HE HAS TO
HIT ME WITH ONE
MORE THING...

I'LL BE
SURE AND TELL
PERRY HE'S BETTER
OFF W/THOUT
YOU ANYWAY. YOU
WERE ALL T.S.K.,
GIRLFRIEND...

...NO
"FOLLOW
THROUGH"...

...AND IN
THE '90'S, A
GUY JUST
DESERVES
MORE!

SCHRIIPPT

YOU'RE
RIGHT...

HE SHOULD'VE JUST
KEPT MAKING



YOU
DESERVE
MORE

FOR
SOMEONE
WHO JUST GOT
WHAT THEY
WANTED...

...YOU
DON'T LOOK
TERRIBLY
HAPPY!

WHACKT!

DON'T
YOU WORRY,
DEAR N'. IT JUST
MEANS YOU WON'T
BE SUCH AN EASY
K... ANYMORE
THAT'S ALL...

AN
EASY KILL?!?
WHAT, LIKE THAT
LITTLE BOY YOU
MASSACRED?!



FACE TO
BREAK IT
TO YOU,
PRINCESS...

...AND WHILE
I KNOW IT MAY BE
DIFFICULT TO GIVE THE
CONCEPT ROOM TO BREATHE
IN THAT MUDDLED BLONDE
HEAD OF YOURS,
**THIS TIME I'M
NOT "GUILTY AS
CHARGED!!!"**

LIAR!!

THE HEART OF THE FOREST,
WHERE EVIL HAS ROUND
LEGS AND MAKES ITS WAY
THROUGH THE DENSE, MOIST
UNDERBUSH...

SO
TELL
ME...

HOW
BAD DOES IT
SUCK THAT YOU'RE
TRAPPED UNDER TA'S
FUCKING LEFT RAW
AND EXPOSED TO WHAT
EVER UNCOMELY ELEM-
ENTS WACKMIGAE
PRESENT THEMSELVES?
ELEMENTS - ME ME,
FOR INSTANCE.

HOW
BAD DOES
IT SUCK?

IT
PROBABLY
SUCKS ABOUT AS
BAD AS HAVING TO
WALK AROUND WITH
A FORESKIN
FOR A FOREHEAD.

OKAY.

YOU
GOT ME
THERE.

BUT
COMMENTS - WE
TART DON'T NECESSARILY
ENDER THEMSELVES
TO MY "GOOD SAMARITAN"
SENSIBILITIES MY
IGNORANT SMELLY
FRIEND.

LIKE
YOU'D HELP
ME ANYWAYS
YOU LITTLE
JACKASS

WELL...
I AM BORED
AND WE DO HAVE
SOMETHING IN COMMON
WE BOTH MANAGED TO
ESCAPE BRIE'S "FIERO
OF DEATH" AND WE
ARE BOTH TRAPPED
HERE... WELL YOU'RE
ACTUALLY MORE
TRAPPED THAN
I AM.

IF YOU
HELP ME

I'LL SHARE
WITH YOU A GREAT
AND TERRIBLE
SECRET
ALLRIGHT???



AND
JUST WHAT
SECRET WOULD
THAT BE?

RULES
OF THE GAME
MEMBRANE
MELON. YOU HELP
ME OUT FROM
UNDER HERE
FIRST.

okay...

KARUNCH!!

...I'LL
BITE.

EAT
MIE

FINALLY!

I'D
say it's nice
to see you again,
flatulence,
but that would
be lying

and
i'm trying
to quit.

WHATEVER.

NOW
LET'S REAR
THIS "GREAT AND
TERRIBLE"
SECRET!

OKAY.
SURE, I MEAN,
A DEAL'S A
DEAL
ALLRIGHT?

THE GREAT...

...AND TERRIBLE...

...SECRET...

...IS THAT...

...I...

...AM IN POSSESSION...

...OF THE ONE THING...

...THAT WILL MAKE YOU SHUT YOUR STUPID MOUTH...

FOREVER!

NOW YOU WILL BOW BEFORE THE POWER AND THE STENCH THAT IS ME!!! I AM YOUR MASTER! I AM YOUR GOD! NOW YOU WILL ANSWER TO ME, LONELY NIGHTMARELING!! ALLRIGHT?!!

YOU WILL ADDRESS ME WITH RESPECT AND REVERENCE OR NOT AT ALL, FATBOY!

GUESS WHAT, ID OT?

FEELING PRETTY STUPID RIGHT ABOUT NOW, BRENT? Y'G? I MEAN MORE SO THAN USUAL.

THAT OF NG WORKS BETTER WITH THE STONE MECC. LAST TIME I CHECKED, ANYWAY. WERE YOU HAVE THERE IS AN OVER-SIZED PAPER WE'GAT!

OH, WELL. FINE. OKAY. ALLRIGHT.

YOU FEEL FREE TO GO TO HELL ANYWAY. ALLRIGHT?!!

IT WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE INTERESTING THERE ACTUALLY. BUT I'VE GOT A NOSE FOR TROUBLE, AND THAT THING MIGHT JUST PROVE USEFUL YET.

PERRY'S HOUSE, SALEM.
WHERE A DISTANT EIGHTEEN-
YEAR-OLD RACES THE
MORNING SUN TO PACK UP
WHAT'S LEFT OF HIS LIFE...

HOW
YOU FEELIN',
MAN?

IT'S
STRANGE, YOU
KNOW? I
MEAN...

"THERE'S
CERTAINLY
NOTHING LEFT
TO KEEP ME HERE.
NOT ANY
MORE."

IT'S
LIKE THERE'S
THIS BIG, FLASHING
NEON SIGN TELLING
ME TO GET THE
HELL OUT OF
THIS TOWN.

YEAH,
BUT THAT BIG,
"FLASHING NEON SIGN"
IS POINTING YOU TO
A FULL SCHOLARSHIP
AT UCLA, PERRY,
AND THAT'S NOT A
BAD PLACE TO
BE OFF TO.

I'LL MISS
YA, MAN, BUT FACE
FACTS, PAL. THE
WINDS OF CHANGE
HAVE BLOWN, AND
BLOWN HARD. IT'S
TIME, BROTHA.

TIME
YOU GOT THE
HELL OUT. TIME
TO MOVE ON.

I HAVE
A FEELING
THERE'S AN ENTIRE
WORLD OUT THERE
JUST WAITING TO
SINK ITS TEETH
INTO ONE 'PERRY
STODGHILL'.

YOU TWO ARE GREAT TAGGED
I WANT TO PROBLEMS
MORE OF THE MASS
LIVE STARTED

THE PROBLEMS OF
THEY ARE COMPARING, TODAY
2000 IS A RITE OF THE
THE A PROBLEMS
THE PROBLEMS
THE PROBLEMS

THE PROBLEMS
THE PROBLEMS
THE PROBLEMS
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THE PROBLEMS

B

A
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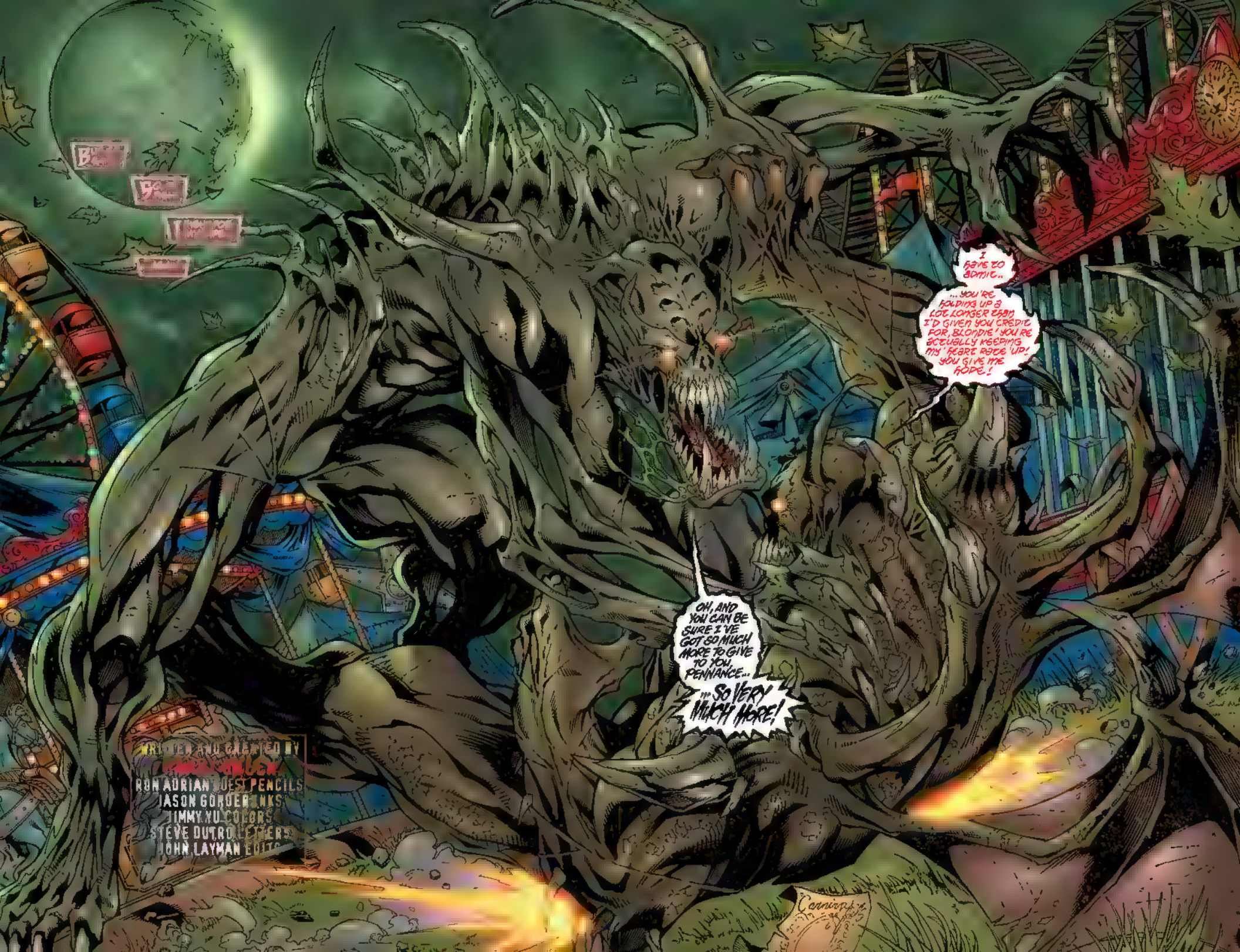
THE PROBLEMS
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THE PROBLEMS

THE PROBLEMS
THE PROBLEMS
THE PROBLEMS



I HAVE TO ADMIT...
... YOU'RE HOLDING UP A LOT LONGER THAN I'D GIVEN YOU CREDIT FOR, 'BLONDIE'! YOU'RE ACTUALLY KEEPING MY 'HEART RATE' UP! YOU GIVE ME HOPE!

OH, AND YOU CAN BE SURE I'VE GOT SO MUCH MORE TO GIVE TO YOU, PENNANCE...
... SO VERY MUCH MORE!

WRITTEN AND CREATED BY
FRANK MILLER
RON ADRIAN: INKS
JASON GORDON: INKS
JIMMY XU: COLORS
STEVE DUTRO: LETTERS
JOHN LAYMAN: EDITOR

Carnegie

GIVE
IT TO ME,
BABY!

GIVE
ME ALL YOU
GOT! I CAN
TAKE IT! I
CAN HANDLE
PERRY
COULDN'T.
BLESS HIS LITTLE
"PRETTY BOY
JOCK" HEART...

BUT
I CAN, I CAN
TAKE IT, AND
I'LL DO IT WITH A
SMILE, DARLIN'.
JUST TO KEEP
THINGS
INTERESTING.

KARUNKT

DO ME
A FAVOR
WILL YOU?

GIVE
YOUR MOUTH
A REST?

THANKS.

BARUNKT

LOOK
WHAT YOU
DID NOW,
LITTLE
GIRL...

YOU'VE
GONE AND
PISSED
THE PUSSY
CATS.



THEY'RE
IN GOOD
COMPANY!

CHUCK?

JEREMY.

I'M
THINKING IT
WOULD BE VERY BAD
TO HAVE OUR TWO
BEST CATS ROAMING
AROUND TH S
GOODFORSKEN
BACKWATER TOWN
CAUSING
TROUBLE.

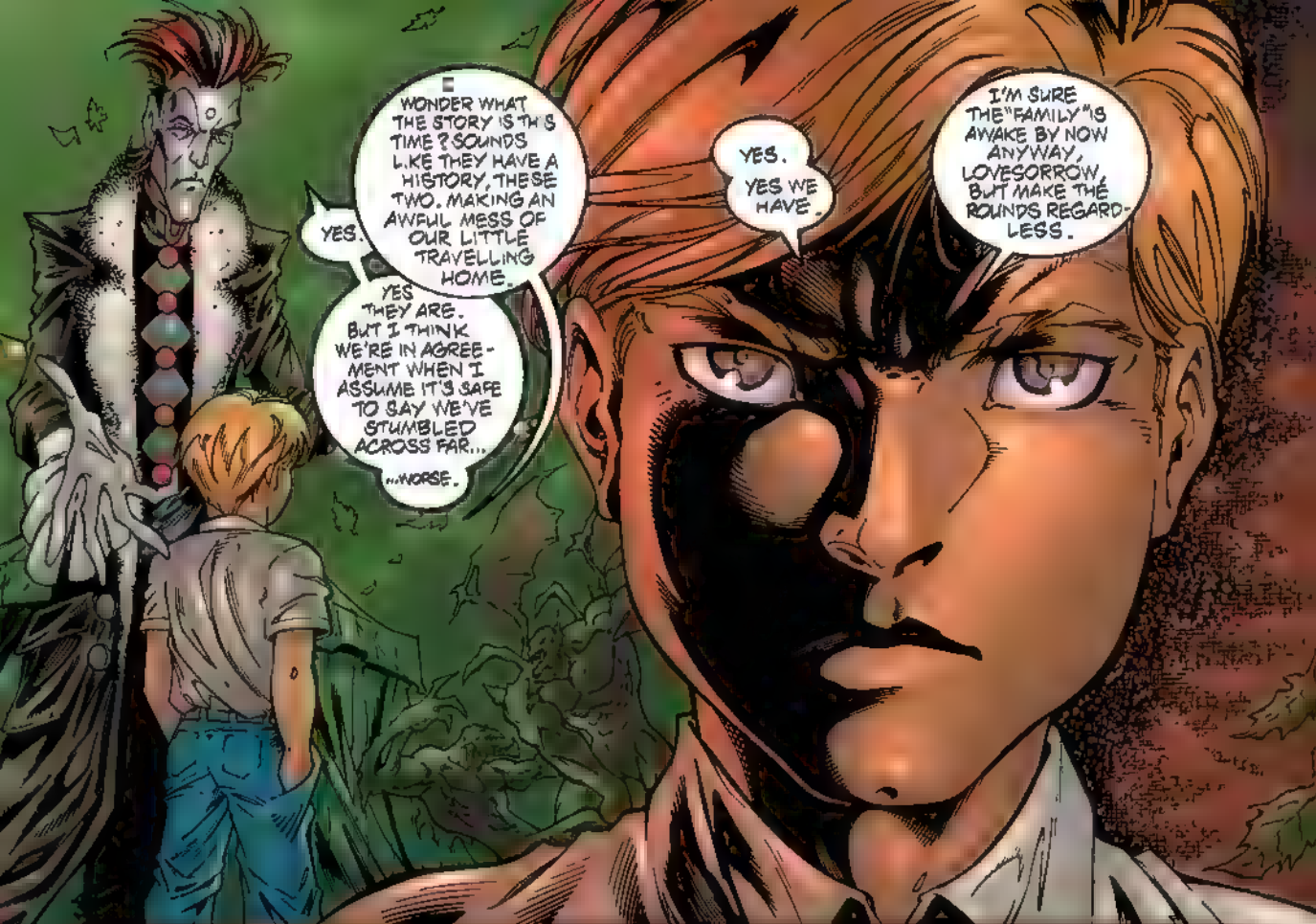
WOULDN'T
YOU ABSOLUTELY
AGREE?

I'D
ABSOLUTELY
AGREE.

THEN
WHY DON'T
YOU BE A
SWEETHEART
AND ABSOLUTELY
TAKE CARE
OF IT?

IT'S
ALREADY
TAKEN
CARE OF.

I HAVE
NOTHING
BUT
FAITH.



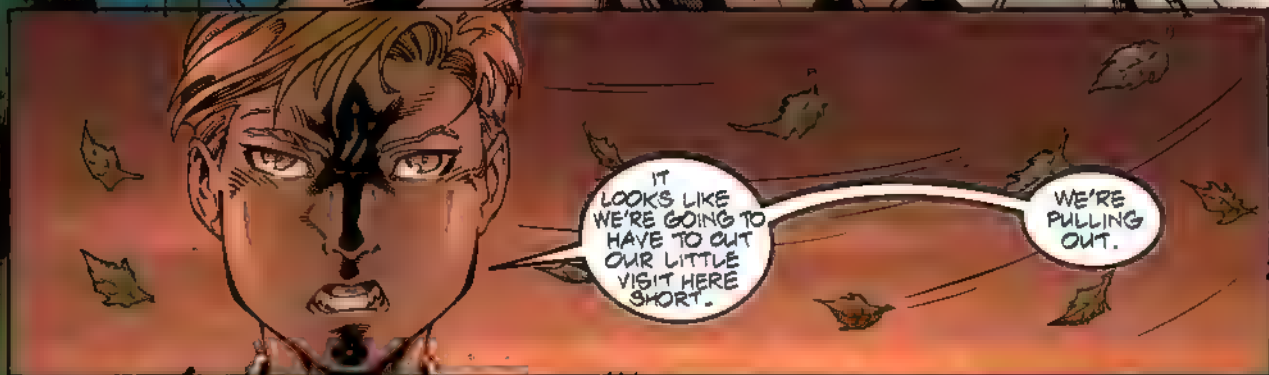
WONDER WHAT THE STORY IS THIS TIME? SOUNDS LIKE THEY HAVE A HISTORY, THESE TWO. MAKING AN AWFUL MESS OF OUR LITTLE TRAVELLING HOME.

YES.
THEY ARE. BUT I THINK WE'RE IN AGREEMENT WHEN I ASSUME IT'S SAFE TO SAY WE'VE STUMBLER ACROSS FAR...

...WORSE.

YES.
YES WE HAVE.

I'M SURE THE "FAMILY" IS AWAKE BY NOW ANYWAY, LOVESORROW, BUT MAKE THE ROUNDS REGARDLESS.



IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO CUT OUR LITTLE VISIT HERE SHORT.

WE'RE PULLING OUT.

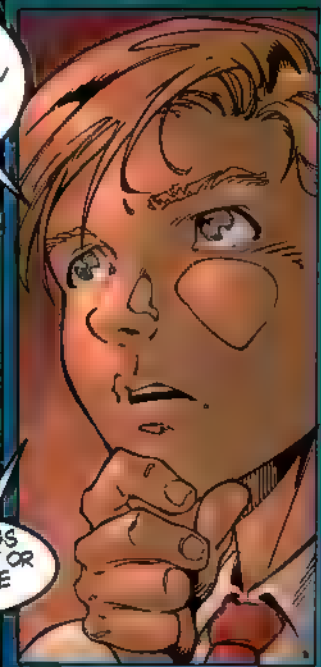


YOU SURE, MR. SPENCER?

OH YEAH. YOU KNOW HOW SKETCHED OUT I GET AROUND ANY AND ALL SUPER-NATURALS OR BLACK MAGIC. JUST BECAUSE I FIND IT FASCINATING, DOESN'T MEAN I WANT IT IN MY FACE.

I JUST CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW SOMEHOW IT KEEPS MANAGING TO FIND US...

...REGARDLESS OF HOW FAST OR HOW FAR WE RUN.





WELL,
BUDDY, THE GOOD
NEWS IS THAT
WE FOUND
ARIEL.

THE
BAD NEWS
IS THAT IT LOOKS
LIKE SOMETHING
ELSE HAS FOUND
HER FIRST.

ARIEL HAS
NO TROUBLE
FINDING
TROUBLE.

THAT'S
PENANCE,
WAR. IN THIS CASE,
IT LOOKS LIKE
MAYBE TROUBLE
FOUND HER... AND
HE'S GOTTEN HER
TO CHANGE AGAIN.
THAT'S BAD.

THAT'S
REAL
BAD.

I
THOUGHT SHE
DIED THAT BIG
JERK. I THOUGHT
HE WAS SUPPOSED
TO BE DEAD.

WAR
SUPPOSED
TO BE DEAD.

PIECE
SUPPOSED
TO BE DEAD.

ARIEL
SUPPOSED
TO BE DEAD.

YEAH...
YEAH, I HEAR
YB. GOOD POINT.
SHE KINDA LOOKS
LIKE SHE'S
GETTING HER
ASS KICKED,
DOESN'T
SHE?

SHALL
WE?

WAR
THINKS IT IS
A FOREGONE
CONCLUSION.

"CONCLUSION"
HUP? YOU'RE
STARTING TO SCARE
ME, BUDDY. THERE'S
A THREE-SYLLABLE
WORD, WAR. DON'T
YOU GO GETTIN'
ALL BRICOLAGE
ON ME...



...IT'S
NOT YOUR
STYLE.

A WARNING GO BIRD
MORPHOLOGY I HAVE
JACK SCREECHING
NO

A WARNING ABOUT THE
DOROMES TORTOISE
ONE IS OVERSIGHT
COMPLETELY DOWNSIDE
KING RATING THE
NORMS AND SAVING
KINGDOM THE BODY
LOW CONSUMED BY THE
BANK THAT IS THIS
CREATURE'S FACE

A WARNING ABOUT THE
DOROMES TORTOISE
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KINGDOM THE BODY
LOW CONSUMED BY THE
BANK THAT IS THIS
CREATURE'S FACE

SHAKT

I'LL
TAKE IT
WHERE I
CAN GET
IT.

NEED
SOME HELP
HERE?

CAN'T LEAVE YOU ALONE FOR A MINUTE, CAN WE? YOU NEVER CALL, YOU NEVER WR DE...

NEVER... A DULL MOMENT.

BOOM!!

KICK HIS ASS, WAR!
KICK HIS STUPID ASS!!!

GIVE HIM THE "GOOD STUFF" BABY!

GIVE HIM THE GOOD STUFF!

THAT'S R GHE! THAT'S RIGHT!

WHO'S YOUR DADDY NOW, BIG GUY?

POPPA'S COME HOME, DO YOU FEAR?!?

POPPA'S COME HOME!





SORRY, GIRLY, I'M JUST NOT UP FOR A "BOG-TEAM" TODAY... BUT AT LEAST, NOT ONE LIKE THIS. REMEMBER THIS, LITTLE GIRL...

I WAS NEVER EVEN HERE FOR YOU IN THE FIRST PLACE.

AND AS MUCH AS I WOULD HAVE LOVED IT...

...I DIDN'T KILL THAT LITTLE BOY.

BE SEEN Y'Y!

BUT IF YOU WANT YOUR STUPID HEAD SMASHED IN SOME MORE, BY ALL MEANS...

...KEEP IN TOUCH!

GUYS...

I THINK I'M IN BIG TROUBLE HERE.



YOU
OKAY??

NOT BY
THE NORMAL
DEFINITION,
NO.

ARIEL...



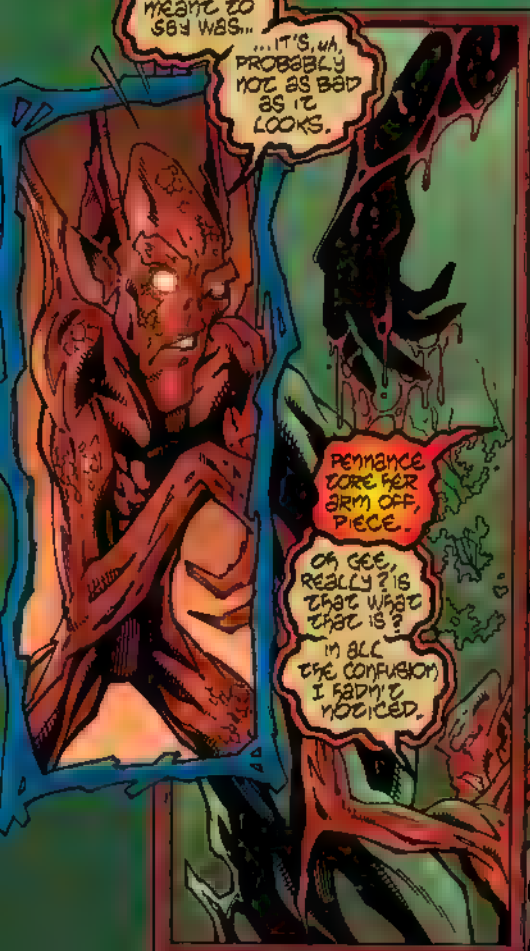
...WHAT
HAPPENED
HERE?

OH MY GOD THAT'S
DISGUSTING!

I MEAN...

...WHAT I
MEANT TO
SAY WAS...

...IT'S, WA,
PROBABLY
NOT AS BAD
AS IT
LOOKS.



REMNANCE
CORE FOR
ARM OFF,
PIECE.

OH GEE,
REALLY? IS
THAT WHAT
THAT IS?

IN ALL
THE CONFUSION
I HADN'T
NOTICED.



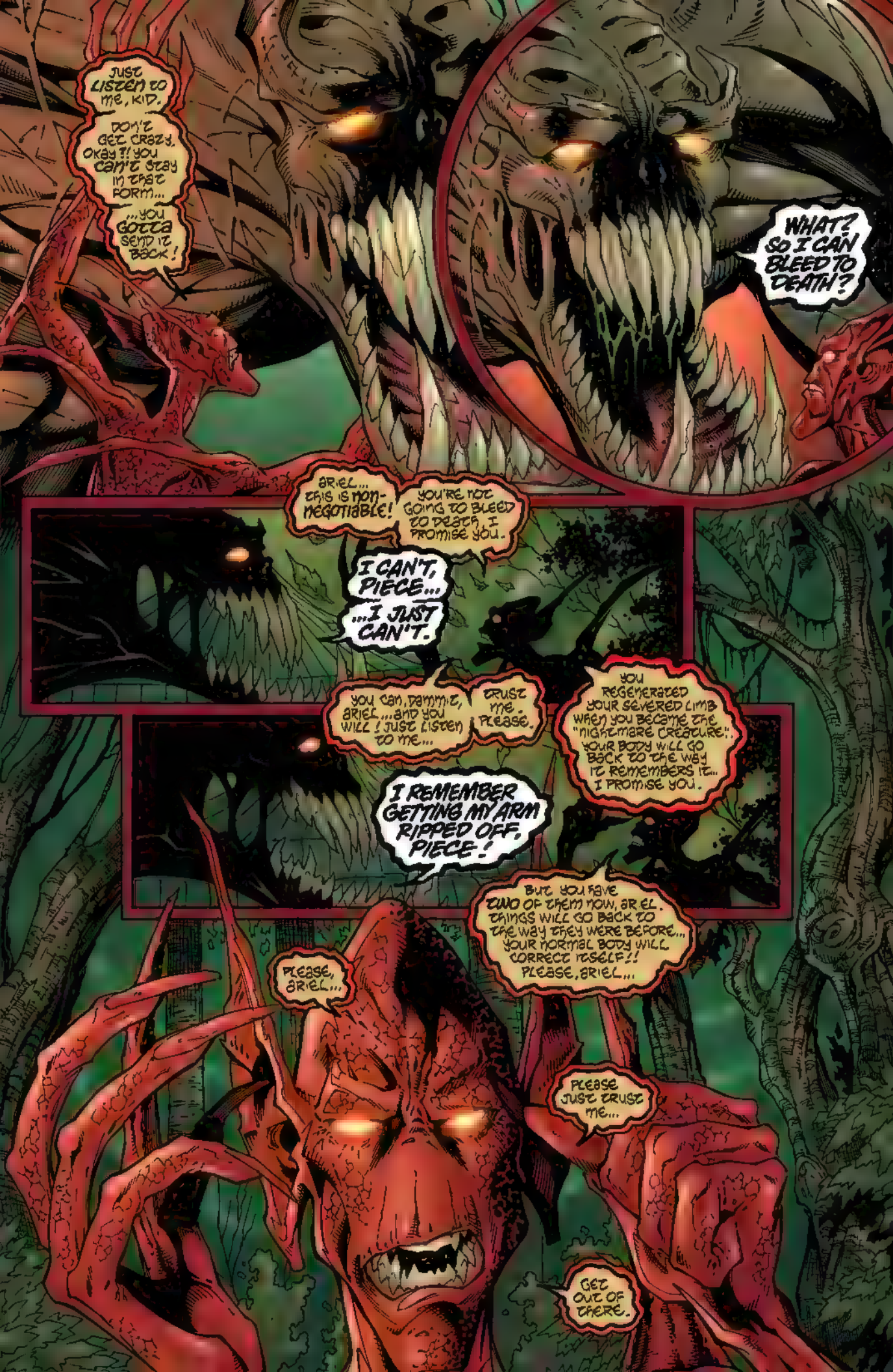
LISTEN,
KID, DON'T
WORRY ABOUT
THIS...THIS
IS A NO-
BRAINER.

PIECE, I'M
SCARED.

I'M SCARED
TO BECOME
HUMAN
AGAIN.

PIECE...

...WILL MY
ARM STILL
BE GONE?



JUST
LISTEN TO
ME, KID.

DON'T
GET CRAZY,
OKAY?! YOU
CAN'T STAY
IN THIS
FORM...

...YOU
GOTTA
SEND IT
BACK!

WHAT?
SO I CAN
BLEED TO
DEATH?

ARIEL...
THIS IS NON-
NEGOTIABLE!

YOU'RE NOT
GOING TO BLEED
TO DEATH, I
PROMISE YOU.

I CAN'T,
PIECE...

...I JUST
CAN'T.

YOU CAN, DAMN IT,
ARIEL... AND YOU
WILL! JUST LISTEN
TO ME...

TRUST
ME.
PLEASE.

YOU
REGENERATED
YOUR SEVERED LIMB
WHEN YOU BECAME THE
"NIGHTMARE CREATURE."
YOUR BODY WILL GO
BACK TO THE WAY
IT REMEMBERS IT...
I PROMISE YOU.

I REMEMBER
GETTING MY ARM
RIPPED OFF,
PIECE!

BUT YOU HAVE
TWO OF THEM NOW, ARIEL.
THINGS WILL GO BACK TO
THE WAY THEY WERE BEFORE...
YOUR NORMAL BODY WILL
CORRECT ITSELF!!
PLEASE, ARIEL...

PLEASE,
ARIEL...

PLEASE
JUST TRUST
ME...

GET
OUT OF
THERE.



YOU
SURE,
PIECE?

SHUT
YOUR STUPID
MOUTH, WER!
I DON'T NEED ANY
HELP FROM YOU
ON THIS!

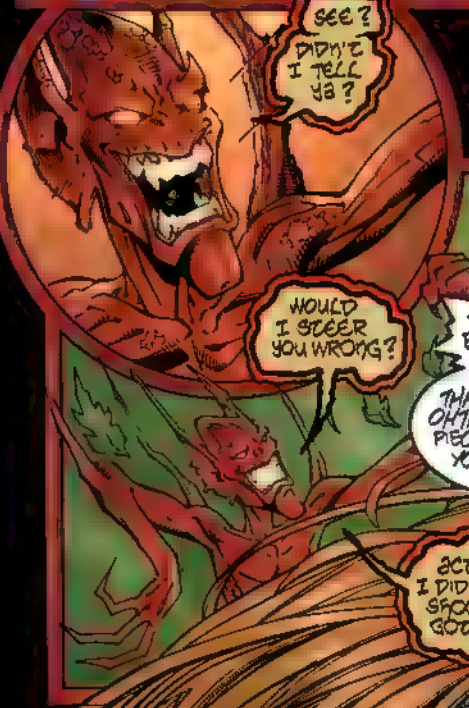


I KNOW
WHAT I'M
TALKING ABOUT
HERE...



YOU
BETTER...

...I'M
DEAD IF YOU
DON'T.



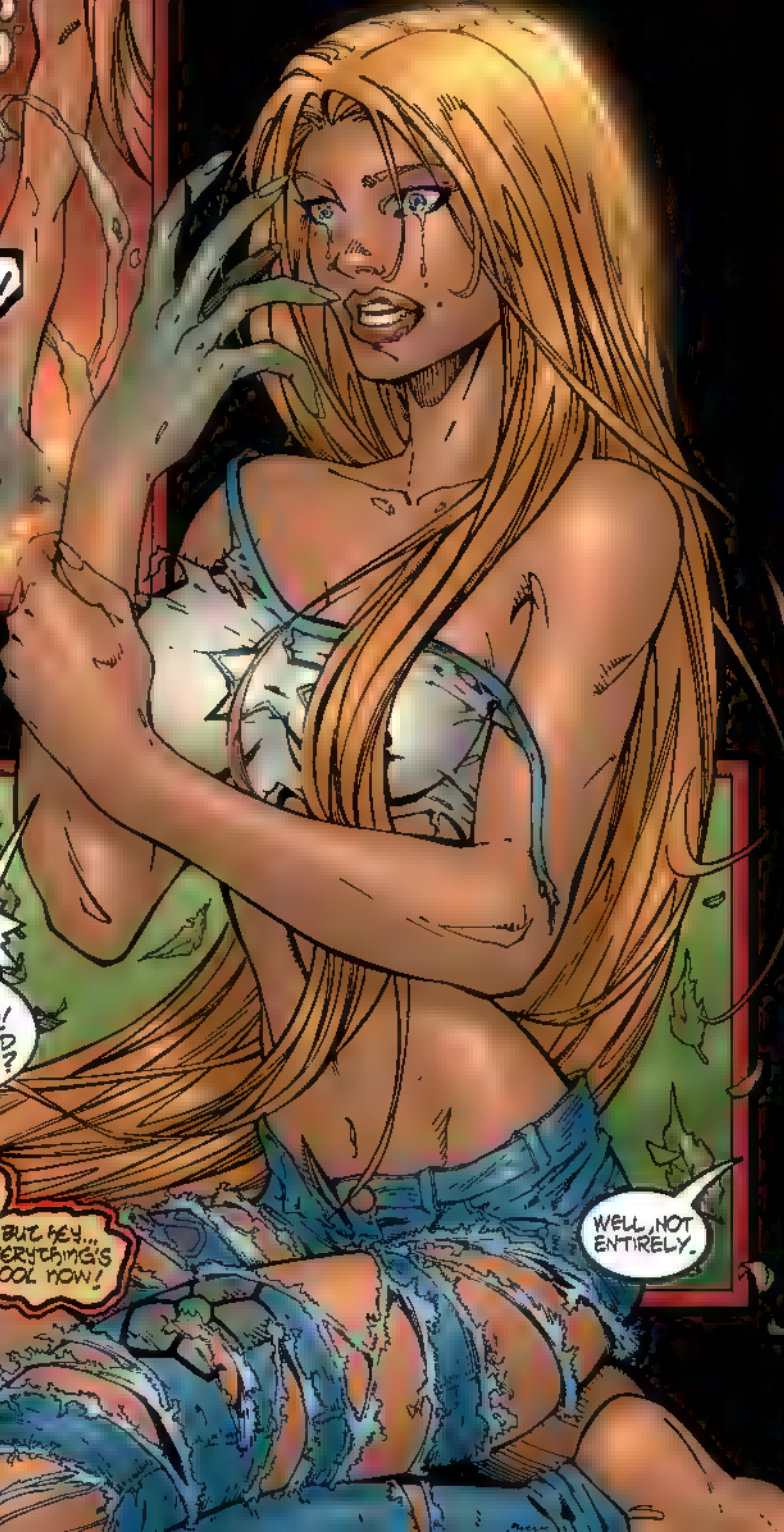
SEE?
DIDN'T
I TELL
YA?

WOULD
I STEER
YOU WRONG?

I CAN'T
BELIEVE
IT!

THANK GOD
OH THANK GOD!
PIECE, HOW DID
YOU KNOW?

ACTUALLY
I DIDN'T. CRAP
SHOOT. WE
GOT LUCKY. BUT HEY...
EVERYTHING'S
COOL NOW!



WELL, NOT
ENTIRELY.



Oh, man.
When it
rains, it
pours,
don't it?

WELCOME TO
THE FREAKSHOW!

LOOK WHO'S TALKING...

...A LITTLE RED DEVIL WITH A BLIND EYE TOWARDS IRONY.

HA HA HA. THAT'S FUNNY.

ALLS I SEE IS A LITTLE KID WITH A BIG MOUTH.

YOU KNOW, ORDINARILY I WOULDN'T MIND A FEW PARTY CRASHERS. BUT NOT WHEN THEY THREATEN MY FAMILY AND DESTROY MY HOME...

...OUR HOME.

MY NAME IS JEREMY SPENCER AND THIS IS MY CARNIVAL.

YOUR MOTHER MUST BE SO PROUD.

I SEE
WE'VE HIT
IT OFF.

THE
ONLY THING
I'M "HITTING"
IS THE BAD
GUYS, UNDER-
STAND?

YEST, AND
OCCASIONALLY
LITTLE BOYS
WITH BAD
HAIRCUTS.

SPEAKING
OF LITTLE
BOYS...

...THERE'S,
MM...

...THERE'S
A DEAD ONE
IN THE
CAROUSEL
TENT.

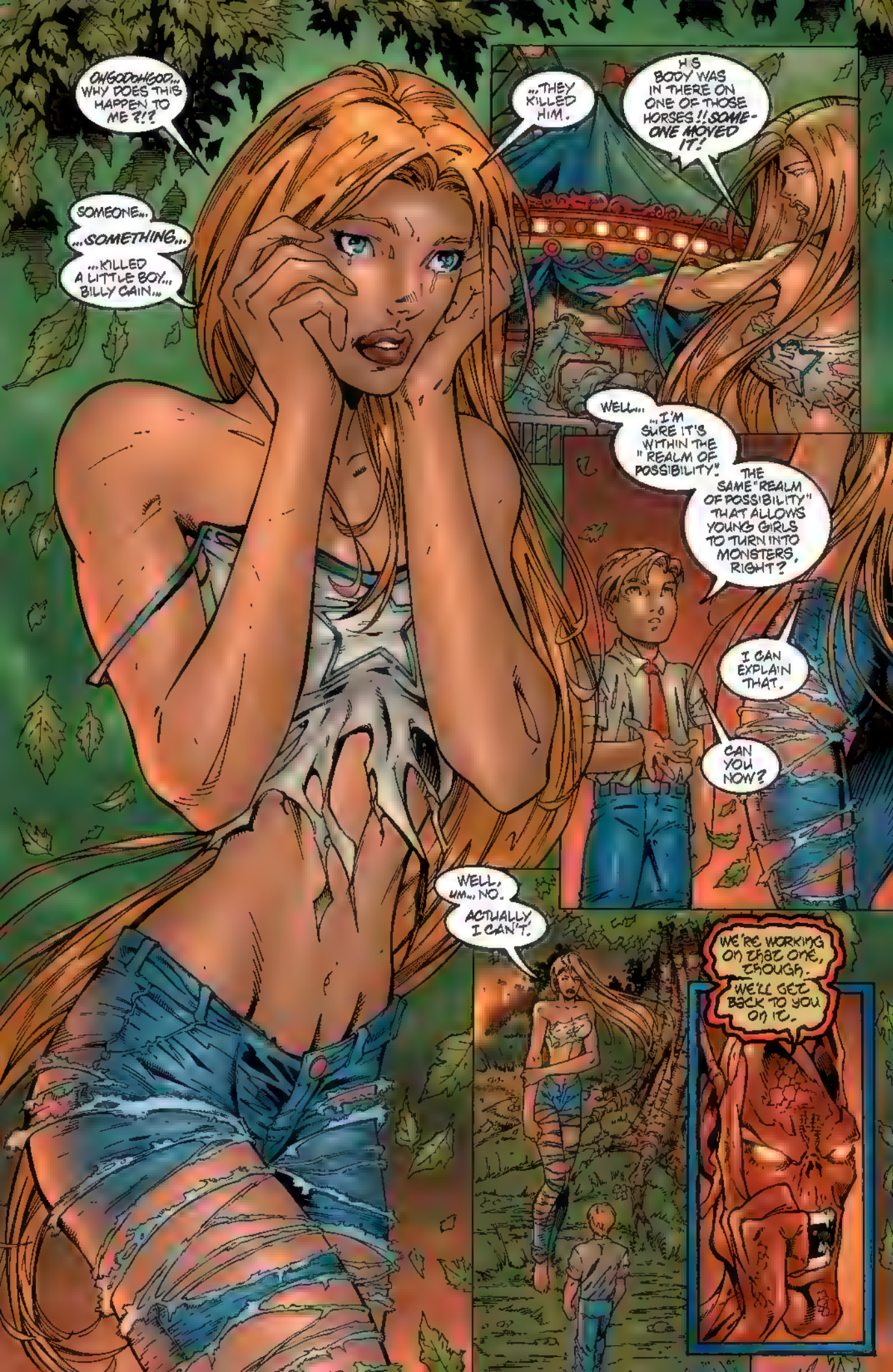
NO
THERE
ISN'T.

WHAT?

UNLESS
THE KID TURNED
INVISIBLE WHEN
HE STOPPED
BREATHING...

...THERE
AIN'T NO DEAD
BODY IN THERE.
JUST A 1925
"CHARLES LOOF"
ANTIQUE CAROUSEL
CART THAT'S PRETTY
MUCH TRASHED
NOW.

AND
THAT'S
IT.



OH GOD OH GOD...
WHY DOES THIS
HAPPEN TO
ME?!!

SOMEONE...

...SOMETHING...

...KILLED
A LITTLE BOY...
BILLY CAIN...

...THEY
KILLED
HIM.

HIS
BODY WAS
IN THERE ON
ONE OF THOSE
HORSES!! SOME-
ONE MOVED
IT!

WELL...

I'M
SURE IT'S
WITHIN THE
"REALM OF
POSSIBILITY".

THE
SAME "REALM
OF POSSIBILITY"
THAT ALLOWS
YOUNG GIRLS
TO TURN INTO
MONSTERS,
RIGHT?

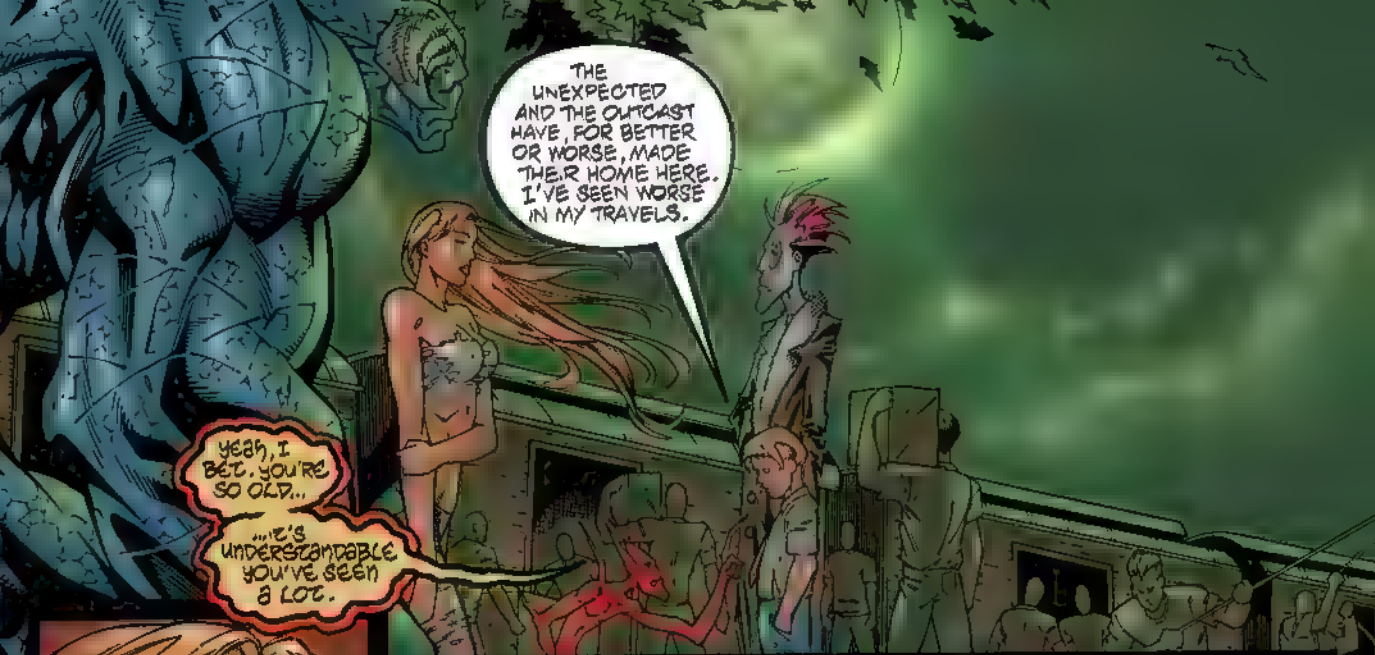
I CAN
EXPLAIN
THAT.

CAN
YOU
NOW?

WELL,
UM... NO.

ACTUALLY
I CAN'T.

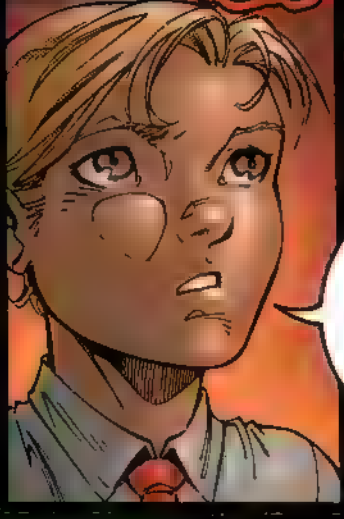
WE'RE WORKING
ON THAT ONE,
THOUGH.
WE'LL GET
BACK TO YOU
ON IT.



THE
UNEXPECTED
AND THE OUTCAST
HAVE, FOR BETTER
OR WORSE, MADE
THEIR HOME HERE.
I'VE SEEN WORSE
IN MY TRAVELS.

YEAH, I
BET. YOU'RE
SO OLD...

...IT'S
UNDERSTANDABLE
YOU'VE SEEN
A LOT.



WHAT
ABOUT THAT
LITTLE BOY,
JEREMY?

WORD IS,
THERE IS NO LITTLE
BOY... BUT I'LL PACIFY
YOU WITH LOOKING.
WHAT THERE IS, HOW-
EVER, IS QUITE A BIT
OF DAMAGE TO MY
HOME CAUSED BY
BOTH YOU AND
YOUR FRIENDS
HERE.

QUITE
A BIT OF
EXPENSIVE
DAMAGE, I
MIGHT
ADD.

REGARDLESS,
I'VE NEVER BEEN
ONE TO WEAR OUT
MY WELCOME.
THINGS HAVE TAKEN
A TURN FOR THE
"WEIRD ZONE" HERE,
AND THIS TRAIN,
QUITE LITERALLY,
IS HEADING
OUT.

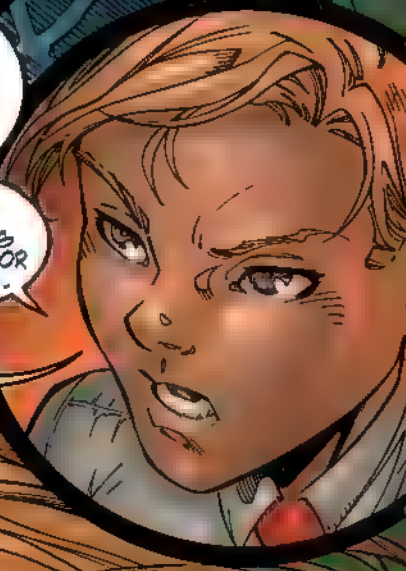


WHERE
ARE YOU
HEADED?

SOME-
WHERE ELSE.
WE'RE HEADED
WEST, AND
EVERYWHERE IN
BETWEEN. WE
LIKE TO KEEP
MOVING...

"IT'S
CALLED A
TRAVELLING
CARNIVAL FOR
A REASON."

WHY?
YOU
WANNA RUN AWAY
AND JOIN THE CIRCUS?
WORK OFF THIS
DAMAGE YOU'VE
CAUSED?





NOT PARTICULARLY, NO.

BUT I WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON...

AND I DON'T THINK ANYONE WILL PARTICULARLY MISS ME...

OH, GOD...

HERE WE GO AGAIN.

Answers about
the

here
going
off
the
morning

Answers about
Barnard's
uncertainty
and terror

Answers about
the

Answers about
the

Answers about
the

Answers about
the

Answers about
the
riddle
of the
penmanship

Answers about
child murderer
Barnard
knowing
the curse

Answers about
the
ultimate
secret

Answers about
the
secret
of the

TO BE
CONTINUED



SLOW
NIGHT?!

WHAUGH!!

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU?!



I'M
YOUR WORST
NIGHTMARE,
REDNECK!

I NEED
TO KNOW WHERE
THAT LAST TRAIN
LEFT OUT
OF HERE. WAS
FEEDING THE
ONE WITH THE
CROSS FREAKS!

YOU
MEAN THE
CARNIVAL
PEOPLE?

DON'T
YOU MIND
WORDS WITH ME,
FILLBILLY! I
DON'T HAVE
TIME FOR
GAMES!!

TELL
ME WHERE
THAT TRAIN
LEFT OFF
TO...

...OR
FEEL THE
RAGE OF MY
DEATH
RATTLE!

AND
TRUST ME,
IT'S PAIN-
FUL.



YOU'LL...
...YOU'LL
LEAVE ME
ALONE IF
I TELL
YOU?

ONLY IF
YOU DO IT QUICK,
MY PATIENCE HAS HIT
ITS THRESHOLD,
UNDERSTAND?

THAT
TRAIN LEFT
OUT OF
HERE FOR
MEMPHIS...

...MEMPHIS,
TENNESSEE.

THANKS
SO MUCH FOR
YOUR HELP,
STEPHEN...



...NOW
YOU
~~DO!~~

BUT
YOU SAID
YOU'D...

ZAP

STUPID INBRED IDIOT!

DON'T YOU KNOW TO NEVER TRUST A GUY THAT LOOKS THE WAY I DO?!

heh heh... shen... shen... THAT WAS GOOD, BABY BOO. YOU REALLY PUNCHED HIS TIME CARD, DIDN'T YA?!

YOU FRIED HIS MISERABLE BUTT... heh heh... D D HIM A FAVOR...

IT WAS A DEAD END JOB ANYWAY ALL RIGHT? YOU DO GET THE JOKE, R GHT BABE? DEAD END? I GOT IT.

HOW ARE WE GOING TO CATCH UP TO THE LITTLE MUNKIE NOW?!

YOU EVER FITTED A RIDE ON A FAST MOVING TRAIN?!

UHHHHMM... NO.

ME NEITHER.

OUTRATA BE INTERESSING.

STUPID INBRED IDIOT!

DON'T YOU KNOW TO NEVER TRUST A GUY THAT LOOKS THE WAY I DO?!

heh heh... shen... shen... THAT WAS GOOD, BABY BOO. YOU REALLY PUNCHED HIS TIME CARD, DIDN'T YA?!

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YOU EVER FITTED A RIDE ON A FAST MOVING TRAIN?!

UHHHHMM... NO.

ME NEITHER.

OUTRATA BE INTERESTING.

KRUSTY: STUPID INBRED IDIOT!

MARGE: DON'T YOU KNOW TO NEVER TRUST A GUY THAT LOOKS THE WAY I DO?!

BART: heh heh... shen... shem... THAT WAS GOOD, BABY BOO. YOU REALLY PUNCHED HIS TIME CARD, DIDN'T YA?!

BART: YOU FRIED HIS MISERABLE BUTT... heh heh... D'D HIM A FAVOR...

MARGE: IT WAS A DEAD END JOB ANYWAY ALL RIGHT? YOU DO GET THE JOKE, R GHT BABE? DEAD END? I GOT IT.

MARGE: HOW ARE WE GOING TO CATCH UP TO THE LITTLE NUNKIE NOW?!

BART: YOU EVER FITCHD A RIDE ON A FAST MOVING CRAB?!

BART: UHHHMM... NO.

BART: ME NEITHER.

BART: OUBATA BE INTERESSING.

STUPID INBRED IDIOT!

DON'T YOU KNOW TO NEVER TRUST A GUY THAT LOOKS THE WAY I DO?

heh heh... shen... shen... THAT WAS GOOD, BABY BOO. YOU REALLY PUNCHED HIS TIME CARD, DIDN'T YA?

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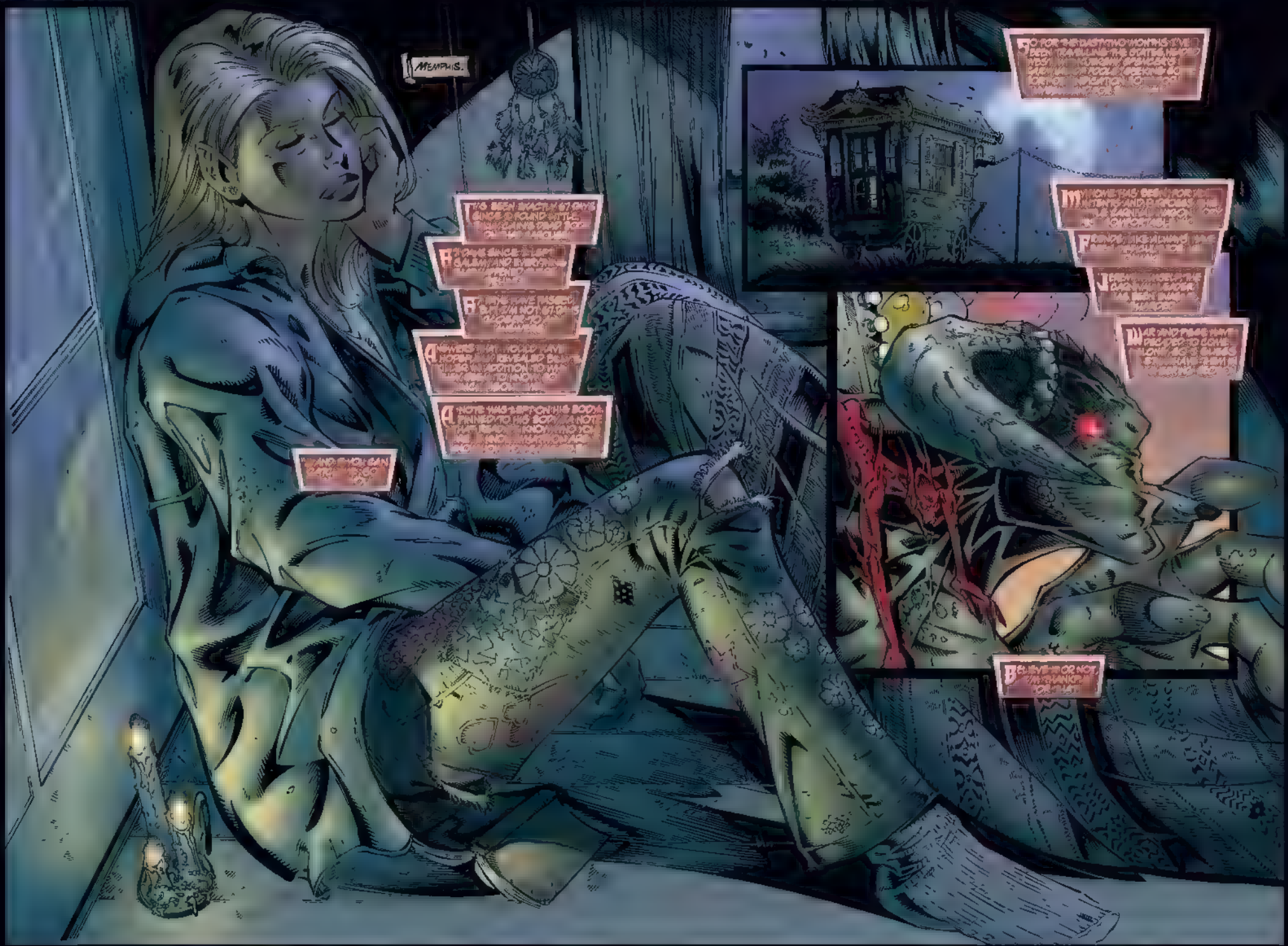
HOW ARE WE GOING TO CATCH UP TO THE LITTLE MUNKIE NOW?!

YOU EVER FITCHED A RIDE ON A FAST MOVING TRAIN?!

UHHHHMM... NO.

ME NEITHER.

OUTRATA BE INTERESSING.



MEMPHIS.

THE BEEN EXACTLY 57 DAYS
SINCE I FOUND THE
BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE
IT IS.

IT'S BEEN SINCE I LEFT
THE HOUSE IN MEMPHIS.

IT'S BEEN SINCE I LEFT
THE HOUSE IN MEMPHIS.

4 YEARS AGO, I LEFT MY
HOUSE IN MEMPHIS. I WAS
GOING TO A FRIEND'S HOUSE
IN THE CITY.

4 MONTHS AGO, I FOUND
THE HOUSE IN MEMPHIS. I
WAS GOING TO A FRIEND'S
HOUSE IN THE CITY.

AND I CAN
SEE IT.

FOR THE LAST 57 DAYS, I
HAVE BEEN TRYING TO FIND
THE HOUSE IN MEMPHIS. I
WAS GOING TO A FRIEND'S
HOUSE IN THE CITY.

MY NAME IS BENJAMIN
AND I AM A
FRIEND OF THE
HOUSE IN MEMPHIS.

FRANKIE'S HOUSE IS
IN THE CITY.

FRANKIE'S HOUSE IS
IN THE CITY.

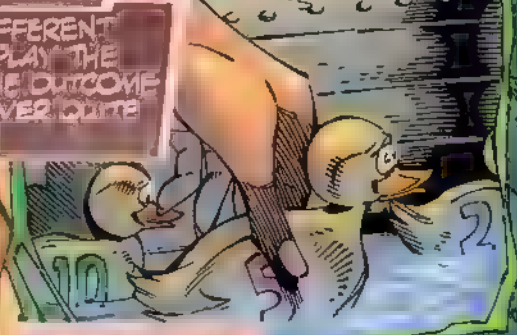
WE ARE NOT THE
ONLY ONE TO
SEE THE HOUSE IN
MEMPHIS.

BE. LIVE OR NOT,
I WILL FIND
THE HOUSE.

YESTERDAY LIKE MOST
OF THE ONES BEFORE
WAS FAIRLY UNEVENTFUL.

AFTER ALL, THERE'S ONLY SO
MANY DIFFERENT WAYS TO
WANDER THE SAME GROUNDS.

ONLY SO MANY DIFFERENT
WAYS YOU CAN PLAY THE
SAME GAMES THE OUTCOME
OF WHICH I NEVER QUITE
AS VARIED.

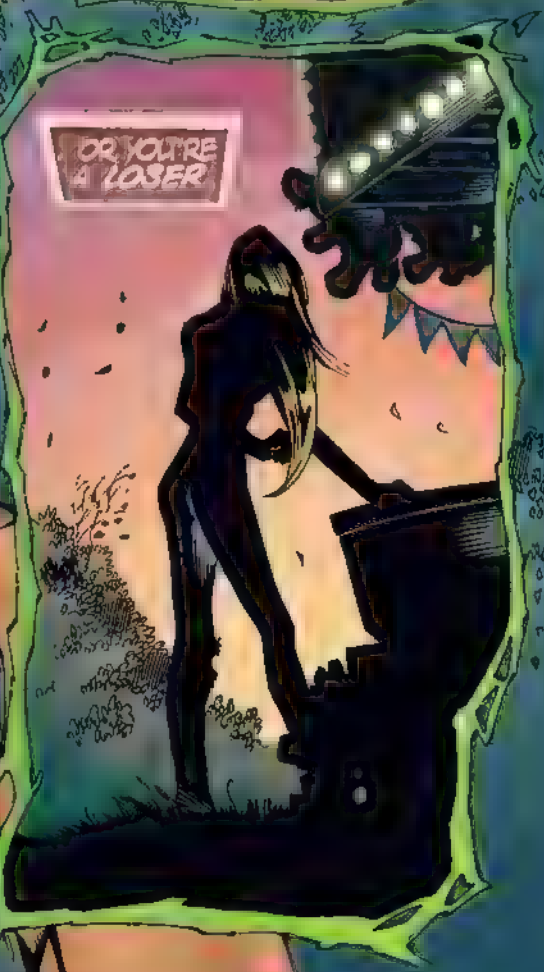


IT'S PRETTY
SIMPLE.

YOU'RE EITHER
A WINNER.



OR YOU'RE
A LOSER.



FOURS HERE'S NO ONE
REALITY SHOWS ARE HERE

4
REALLY? FOR ME?

YOU
KNOW, I'VE
BEEN
WINNING ALL
DAY...

"AND I
JUST DON'T HAVE
ROOM LEFT FOR
ANYMORE PRIZES, SO
WHY DON'T YOU
GIVE THIS LITTLE
FELLA A GOOD
HOME?"

REALLY?
FOR
ME?

WELL, I
SAW YOU THERE
LOOKING SO CUTE,
AND SINCE YOU EVEN
HAVE THE SAME EARRINGS
I DO, I FIGURED I'D
HOOK YOU UP. JUST
PROMISE TO TAKE
GOOD CARE OF
HIM.

OH, I
PROMISE!
THANK YOU
THANK YOU!

IT WAS NICE TO TAKE HER
SMILE MADE ME FEEL
GOOD MADE A DAY

DARKCHILD



THE DARKENED

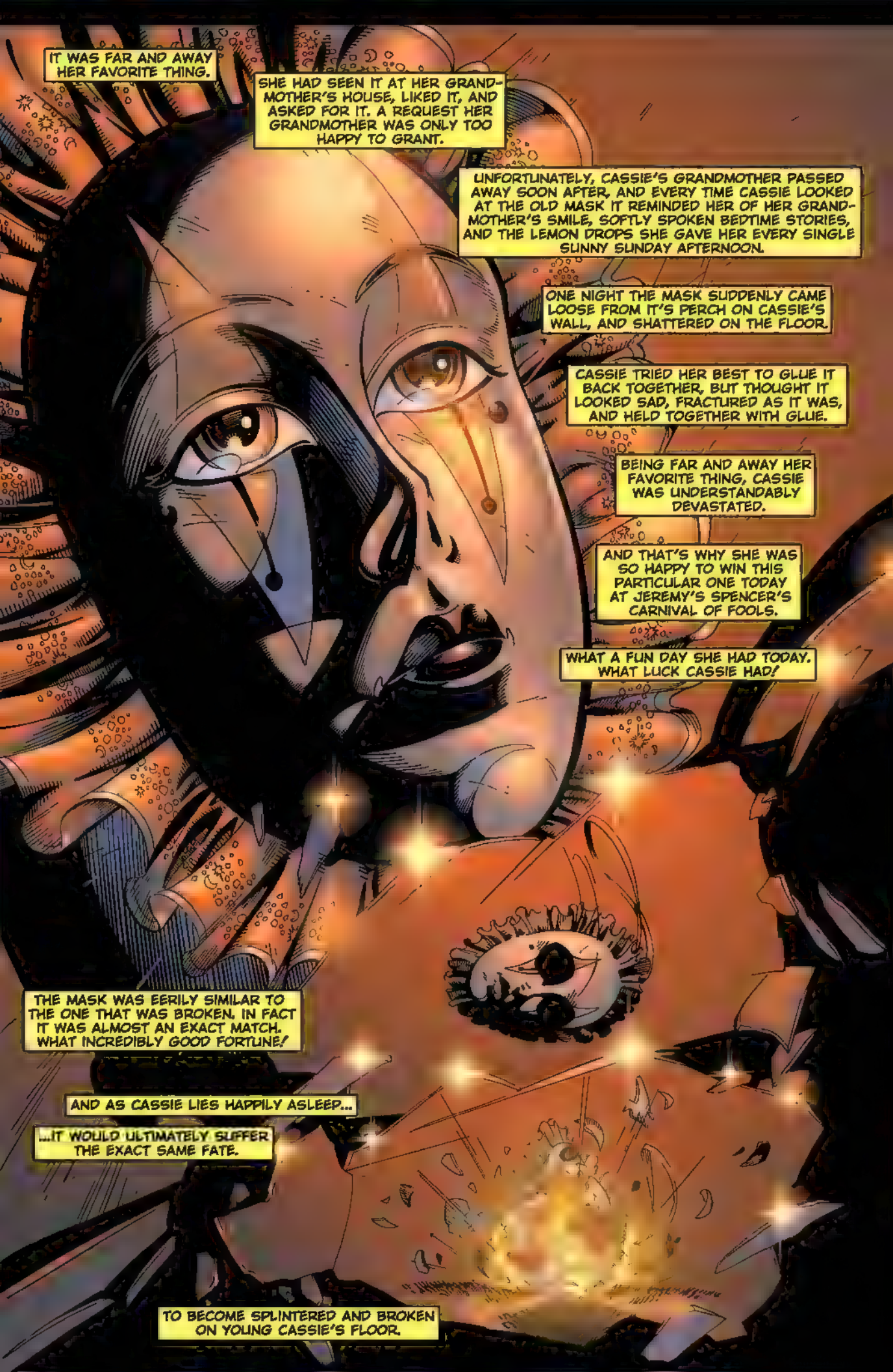
THE DARKENED

DARKENED

REDEMPTION

THE DARKENED

REDEMPTION



IT WAS FAR AND AWAY
HER FAVORITE THING.

SHE HAD SEEN IT AT HER GRAND-
MOTHER'S HOUSE, LIKED IT, AND
ASKED FOR IT. A REQUEST HER
GRANDMOTHER WAS ONLY TOO
HAPPY TO GRANT.

UNFORTUNATELY, CASSIE'S GRANDMOTHER PASSED
AWAY SOON AFTER, AND EVERY TIME CASSIE LOOKED
AT THE OLD MASK IT REMINDED HER OF HER GRAND-
MOTHER'S SMILE, SOFTLY SPOKEN BEDTIME STORIES,
AND THE LEMON DROPS SHE GAVE HER EVERY SINGLE
SUNNY SUNDAY AFTERNOON.

ONE NIGHT THE MASK SUDDENLY CAME
LOOSE FROM IT'S PERCH ON CASSIE'S
WALL, AND SHATTERED ON THE FLOOR.

CASSIE TRIED HER BEST TO GLUE IT
BACK TOGETHER, BUT THOUGHT IT
LOOKED SAD, FRACTURED AS IT WAS,
AND HELD TOGETHER WITH GLUE.

BEING FAR AND AWAY HER
FAVORITE THING, CASSIE
WAS UNDERSTANDABLY
DEVASTATED.

AND THAT'S WHY SHE WAS
SO HAPPY TO WIN THIS
PARTICULAR ONE TODAY
AT JEREMY'S SPENCER'S
CARNIVAL OF FOOLS.

WHAT A FUN DAY SHE HAD TODAY.
WHAT LUCK CASSIE HAD!

THE MASK WAS EERILY SIMILAR TO
THE ONE THAT WAS BROKEN. IN FACT
IT WAS ALMOST AN EXACT MATCH.
WHAT INCREDIBLY GOOD FORTUNE!

AND AS CASSIE LIES HAPPILY ASLEEP...

...IT WOULD ULTIMATELY SUFFER
THE EXACT SAME FATE.

TO BECOME SPLINTERED AND BROKEN
ON YOUNG CASSIE'S FLOOR.

THE SOUND SEEMED TO COME FROM EVERYWHERE AT ONCE, AND WAS LOUDER THAN IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN.

LOUDER THAN IT COULD HAVE POSSIBLY BEEN.

PERHAPS IT WAS CASSIE'S BROTHER PLAYING TRICKS.

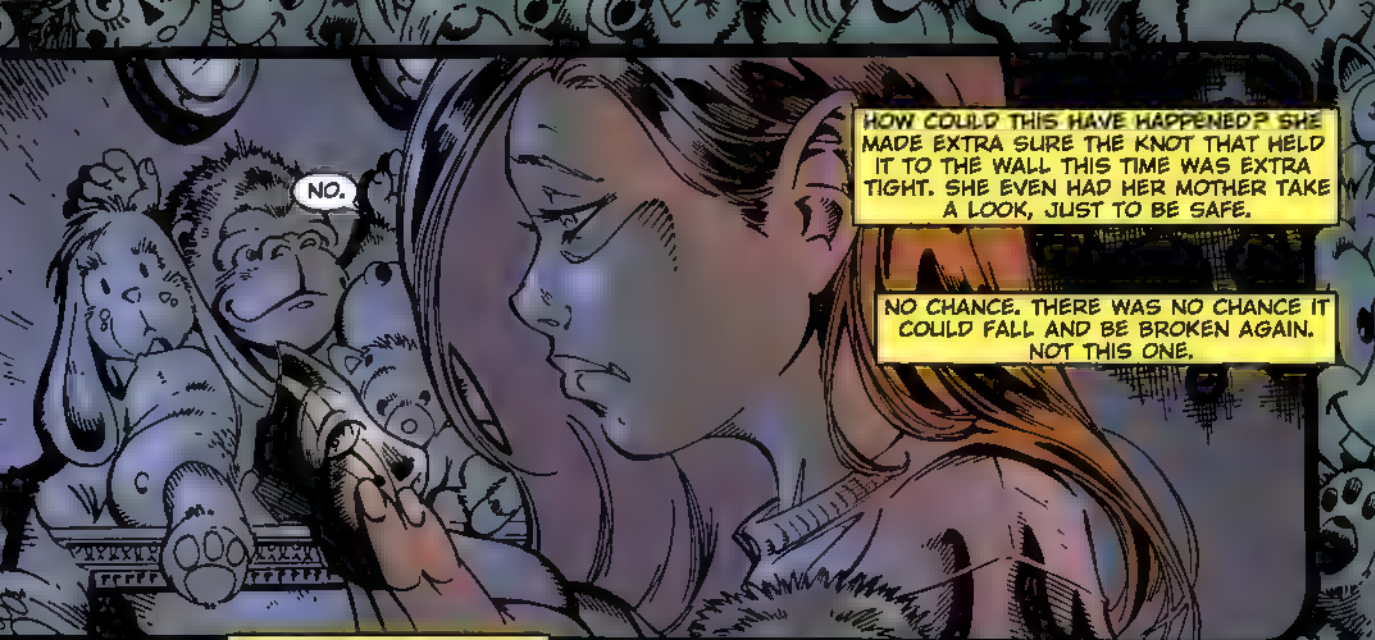
DANIEL??

HER BROTHER HAD A TENDENCY TO LEAN TOWARDS THE CRUEL VARIETY.

ALWAYS PLAYING HURTFUL GAMES, ALWAYS BEING MEANER THAN HE SHOULD EVER BE TO HIS YOUNGER, MUCH SMALLER SISTER.

DANIEL IS THAT YOU??

THEN SHE SEES IT. FOR THE SECOND TIME SHE SEES THE SAD, BROKEN MASK AT HER FEET.

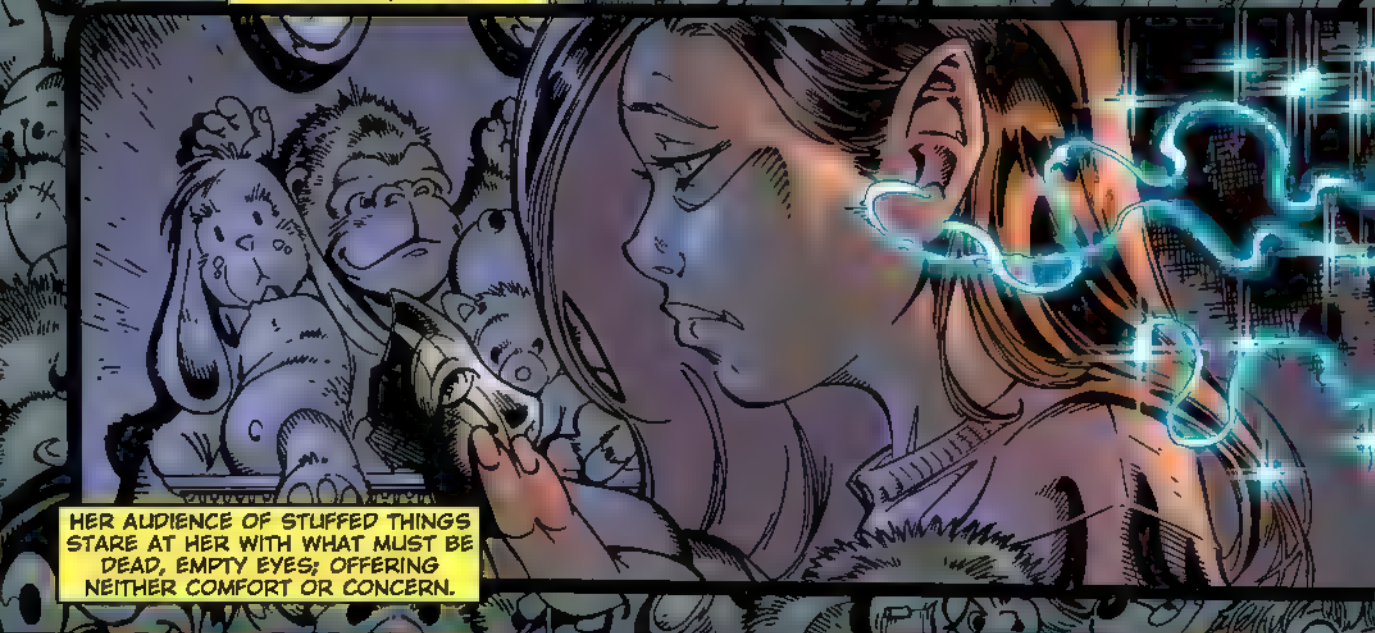


NO.

HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED? SHE MADE EXTRA SURE THE KNOT THAT HELD IT TO THE WALL THIS TIME WAS EXTRA TIGHT. SHE EVEN HAD HER MOTHER TAKE A LOOK, JUST TO BE SAFE.

NO CHANCE. THERE WAS NO CHANCE IT COULD FALL AND BE BROKEN AGAIN. NOT THIS ONE.

BUT IT DID. FOR WHATEVER REASON, IT DID.

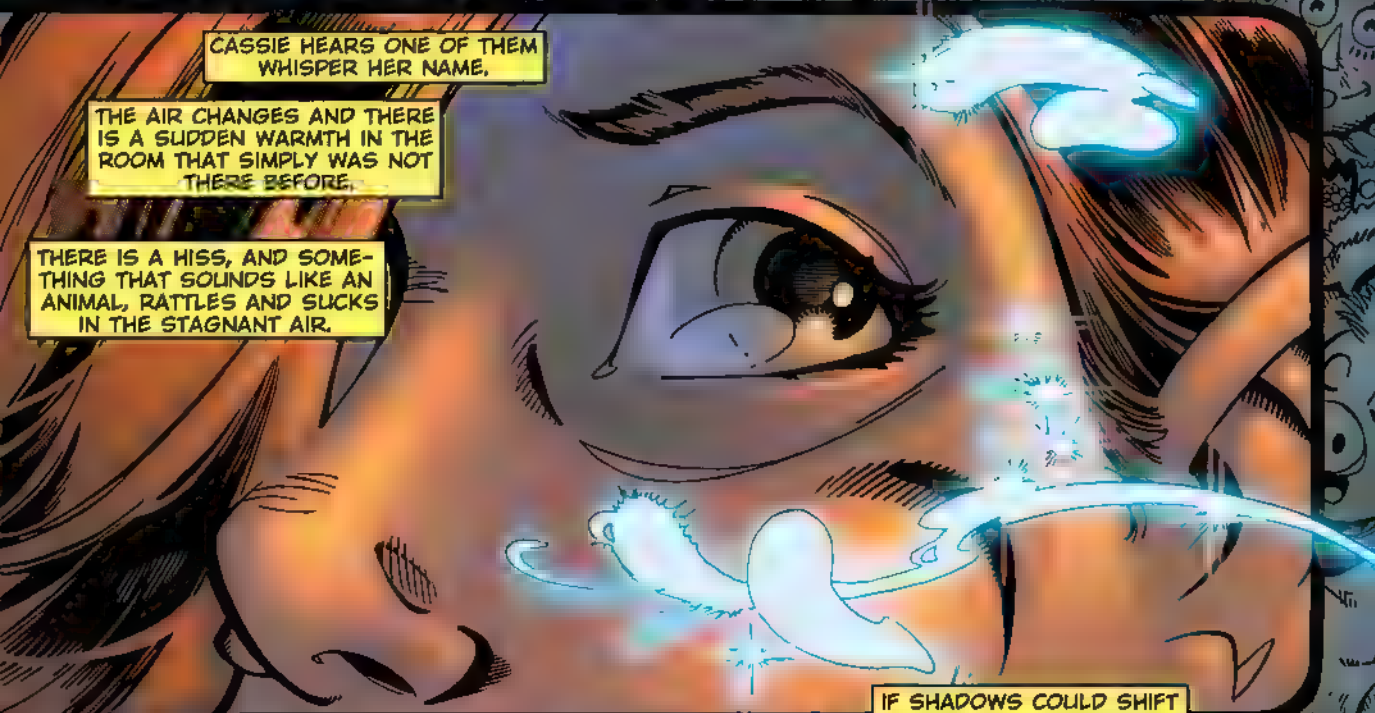


HER AUDIENCE OF STUFFED THINGS STARE AT HER WITH WHAT MUST BE DEAD, EMPTY EYES; OFFERING NEITHER COMFORT OR CONCERN.

CASSIE HEARS ONE OF THEM WHISPER HER NAME.

THE AIR CHANGES AND THERE IS A SUDDEN WARMTH IN THE ROOM THAT SIMPLY WAS NOT THERE BEFORE.

THERE IS A HISS, AND SOMETHING THAT SOUNDS LIKE AN ANIMAL, RATTLES AND SUCKS IN THE STAGNANT AIR.



IF SHADOWS COULD SHIFT AND MOVE, THEY DO.

A dramatic comic book illustration. In the foreground, a young girl with long, light-colored hair looks up with a fearful expression, holding a sleeping baby wrapped in a white cloth. The baby has a small tuft of hair on its head. Behind them, a massive, dark, scaly dragon with glowing blue eyes and sharp teeth looms over them. The dragon's head is the central focus of the background, with its mouth slightly open, revealing sharp teeth. The scene is set against a dark, stormy sky with lightning bolts and falling rain. The overall tone is dark and suspenseful.

THERE IS BARELY TIME FOR A SWIFT, FINAL REALIZATION AS THE THING FROM THE DARK SWOOPS DOWN UPON CASSIE.

SHE WOULD SEE HER GRAND-MOTHER'S SMILE AGAIN SOON.

OHMYGOSH!!
THEY'RE THE
COOLEST!



JEREMY SPENCER'S
"CARNIVAL OF FOOLS."

WHERE KIDS OF ALL AGES ARE TREATED TO A
SPECTACULAR NEW EXCLUSIVE. THE EIGHTH, AND
NINTH WONDERS OF THE WORLD, RESPECTIVELY.



HEY,
KID. COOL
SHIRT.

CHARLES GRODIN
WAS GREAT IN THAT
MOVIE. "LOOKATTAT
EXXON CAMPAIGN, "WE'LL
PUT A TIGER IN YOUR
TANK...." IT DID
ZILLIONS WITH
JUSSA PAPER
TIGER!!!"

HUHP?

NEVERMIND.



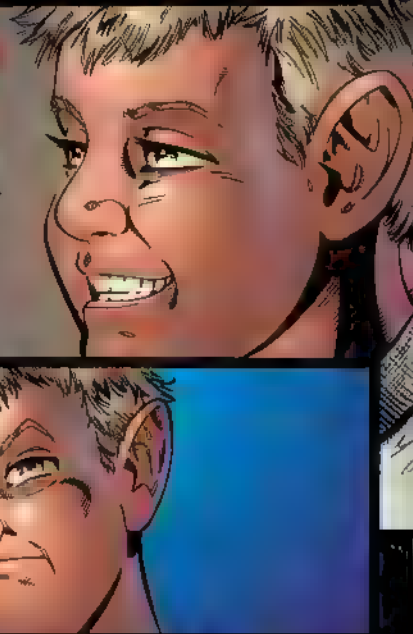
HEY, "SON
OF KONG", IF YOU GIVE
ME THE REST OF THAT ICE
CREAM I'LL LET YOU IN
ON A LITTLE SECRET.

OKAY!

THE "LUCKY DUCK"
GIRL CAN TURN INTO
MONSTERS!

HAHA/
MONSTERS
AREN'T
REAL!

DON'T LOOK NOW,
BUT YOU'RE HAVING A
CONVERSATION WITH
ONE, JUNIOR.



I SWEAR TO YOU...

I WAS ONLY KIDDING ABOUT THE
THE WHOLE "DUCK GIRL" THING.

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU
WISH FOR, RIGHT?

IT'S BEEN OVER A WEEK NOW, AND
EVERY DUCK IS ACTING A LITTLE
I'VE COME TO FIND OUT.

SO HERE I AM, WAITING FOR MY STALKER
TO REAPPEAR, WORKING IN A SUPERHERO
CARNIVAL TO TRY AND PAY OFF SOME
OF THE DAMAGE MY NIGHTMARE
"ALTER EGO" CAUSED.

AND AT WHAT THEY'RE PAYING
(MS. I FIGURE WE CAN CALL
IT "EVEN" SOMETIME JUST
AFTER I TURN FORTY).

I'VE GOTTEN MORE THAN SICK OF
THE CONSTANT SMELL OF COTTON
CANDY, AND I'M AS FAR AS
YOU CAN GET FROM ANYTHING
RESEMBLING HOME INTERNALLY
BY EXTERNALLY.

NOTHING MUCH HAS HAPPENED, IF
YOU DISCOUNT MY HANDS BEING
SHRUNK SO FROM DIPPING THEM
INTO THE WATER ALL DAY, OR THE
CALLUSES I'VE GAINED FROM
STANDING ON MY FEET ALL DAY.

NO, NOTHING MUCH HAS HAPPENED, BUT
THE MARKS ON THE BACK OF MY NECK
HAVE BEEN STANDING UP ALL DAY.
LIKE MAYBE SOMETHING WILL.

THAT AND I WOKED UP WITH STOMACH
CRAMPS THAT HAVE NOTHING TO
DO WITH NATURE.

SOMETHING BAD IS VERY
AWARE THAT I AM HERE.

every
DUCK
& a
ANNER

DUCK

TICKETS



YOU'RE
PRETTY.

THAT'S
FUNNY...

I WAS JUST
THINKING THE
SAME EXACT
THING ABOUT
YOU!!

REALLY?/?

ABSOLUTELY!
WHAT'S YOUR
NAME?

BETHANY!
AND TODAY IS MY
BIRTHDAY!!!

OH WOW! WELL,
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
YOU! YOU WANNA TRY
YOUR HAND WITH A
"LUCKY DUCK"?
IT'S ON ME.

MOMMY,
CAN I?

JUST PICK
A GOOD ONE!

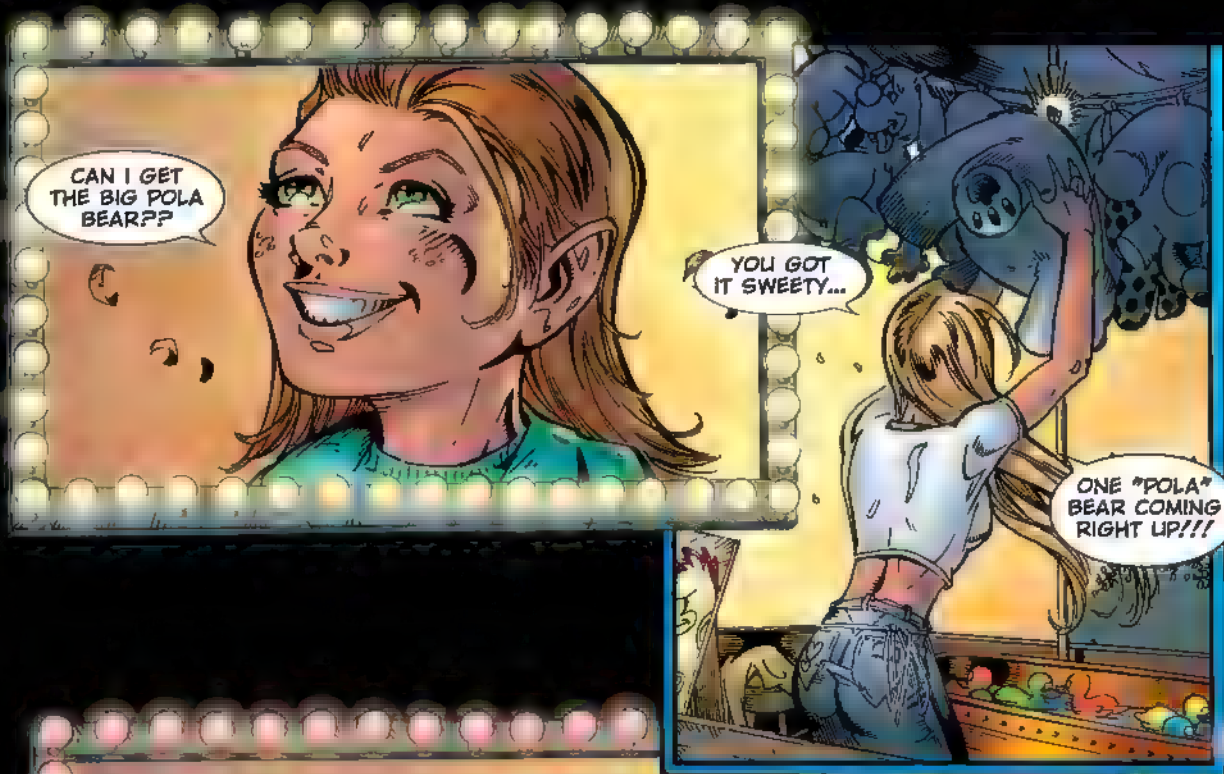
AWWWWWW.
IT SAYS "YOU
LOSE!"

YOU SURE
ABOUT THAT?
LET ME SEE?

THAT'S
FUNNY...

NOW
IT SAYS
"BIRTHDAY GIRL
BETHANY GETS
HER CHOICE OF
ANY OF OUR
WONDERFUL
STUFFED
ANIMALS!!"

PRETTY WILD,
HUH?/?



CAN I GET
THE BIG POLA
BEAR??

YOU GOT
IT SWEETY...

ONE "POLA"
BEAR COMING
RIGHT UP!!!

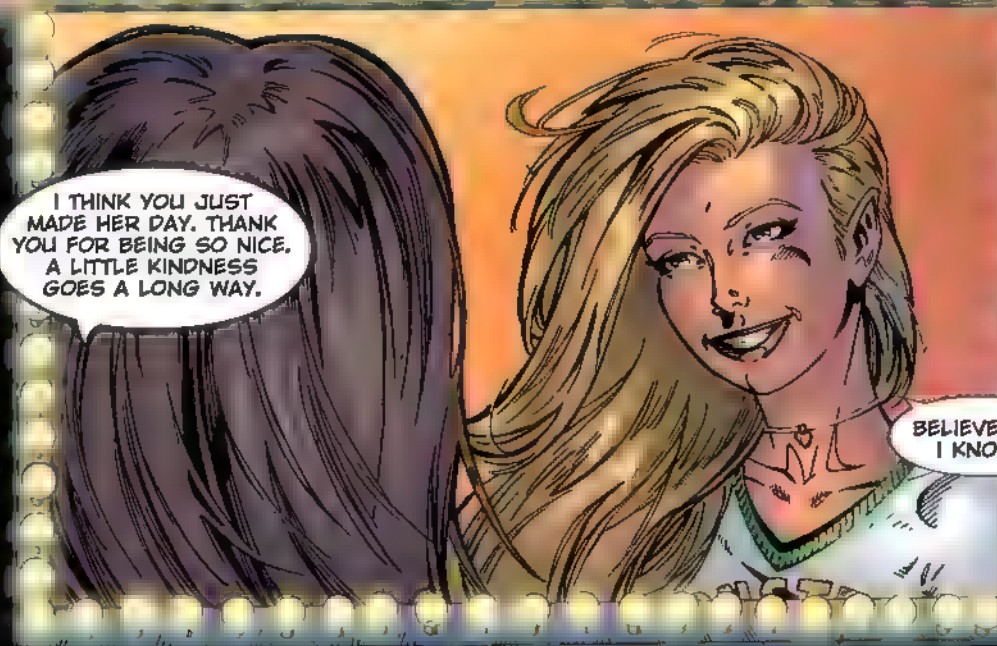


THERE
YOU GO!

WHAT DO
YOU SAY TO
THE NICE
LADY?

THANK
YOU NICE
LADY!

CALL ME ARIEL,
AND YOU'RE WELCOME!!!
YOU BETTER HAVE FUN TODAY
BETHANY, OR I'M GONNA CALL
THE 'HAPPINESS POLICE'
ON YOU!



I THINK YOU JUST
MADE HER DAY. THANK
YOU FOR BEING SO NICE.
A LITTLE KINDNESS
GOES A LONG WAY.

BELIEVE ME,
I KNOW.

ONLY PROBLEM IS THE LAST LITTLE KID I WAS
NICE TO WAS BRUTALLY MURDERED THAT
SAME NIGHT, AND THEN STRUNG UP ON
A CAROUSEL HORSE SO THEY COULD
BLEED ALL OVER ME.

IT'S AN IMAGE THAT HAS SUCCESSFULLY
SCARRED ITSELF ACROSS MY HEART,
WHAT'S LEFT OF MY SANITY, AND MY
VERY SOUL.

IT'S ALSO MADE ME HYPER SENSITIVE
TO MY EVERY MOVE, AND EFFECTED
HOW I INTERACT WITH EVERYONE
AND EVERYTHING AROUND ME.
IN SHORT...

I'M SCARED IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN.

EXCUSE ME
MAM, ONE MORE
THING...

YES?

OH, UM...

...I DIDN'T
GET YOUR
LAST NAME.

I DIDN'T
GIVE IT.

IT'S WAS
JUST A REAL
PLEASURE TO MEET
THE TWO OF YOU,
MISS....?

JAYNE
AND BETHANY
BENTLEY.

YOU
MARRIED?

NOT ANYMORE,
NO. WHY DO YOU
ASK? IS THIS A
PROPOSITION?

OH GOD,
NO. LISTEN,
I...

AT THE
RISK OF SOUNDING
LIKE A BABBLING
IDIOT...

IT'S JUST...

...YOU HAVE
A REALLY WONDERFUL
DAUGHTER. PLEASE JUST
PROMISE TO KEEP A
CLOSE EYE ON HER.

THANKS...

...I
USUALLY
DO.

PENNY
FOR YOUR
THOUGHTS,
KID?

FROM WHERE
I'M STANDING YOU
LOOK A LITTLE FRAYED AT
THE SEAMS... KINDA JUST
LIKE THOSE BLUE JEANS
YOU SEEM TO LOVE
SO MUCH.

I AM FRAYED,
LOVESORROW.

WHY
WOULDN'T I
BE?/?

YOU BEEN WAITING ALL
THIS TIME FOR DISASTER
TO STRIKE AGAIN, ARIEL? I
CAN'T IMAGINE THAT BEING
VERY HEALTHY.

WHAT IS?

IF MAKING A
TOTAL FOOL OUT OF
MYSELF DOES ANYTHING
AT ALL TO KEEP THOSE
KIDS SAFER,
WELL...

...THAT I
CAN LIVE
WITH.

JUST SEE THAT
YOU DON'T LOSE YOUR
'FACULTIES' IN THE
PROCESS.

I LOST
MY FACULTIES
LAST APRIL.

IS THAT WHEN
YOU FIRST FOUND
OUT YOU COULD...

YES.

YOU KNOW KID,
YOU MIGHT NOT BELIEVE
ME, BUT THE SUN *WILL* SHINE
AGAIN. YOU'VE JUST GOT
SOME CLOUDS IN THE
WAY JUST NOW.

THEY'LL HANG AROUND
LONG ENOUGH SO THAT YOU'LL
START TO THINK THEY AIN'T
EVER GONNA LEAVE, BUT
THEY WILL.

THEY'LL
PASS.

YOU'RE
RIGHT.

I DON'T
BELIEVE
YOU.

I CAN'T CATCH HER.

SHE'S MOVING TOO DAMN FAST,
DISSOLVING AHEAD OF ME, IN
AND OUT OF THE SHADOWS
LIKE EDDY QUICKSILVER.

STOP RUNNING BETHANY!

STOP RUNNING BECAUSE...

I ONLY
WANT TO HELP
YOU!! PLEASE
WAIT!!

STAY
AWAY FROM
ME! YOU ARE
EVIL!!

EVERY-
WHERE YOU GO,
THE MONSTERS
COME!

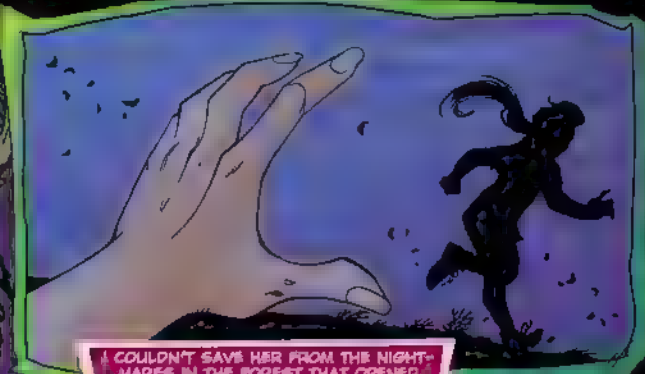
NO,
KILEY...

I'M TRYING
TO SAVE YOU
FROM THEM!!

PLEASE...!!

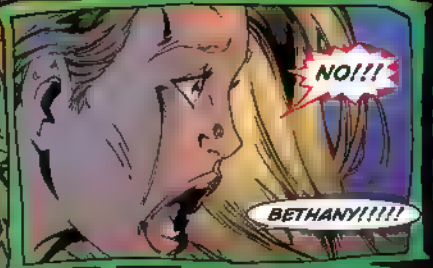
I CALLED HER KILEY, AS FAST AS SHE'S
BARRELING THROUGH THE WOODS
AHEAD OF ME, IT'S NO WONDER I
MADE THE CONNECTION TO MY
CHILDHOOD FRIEND.

I COULD NEVER CATCH HER EITHER,
COULDN'T CATCH HER AND
COULDN'T SAVE HER.



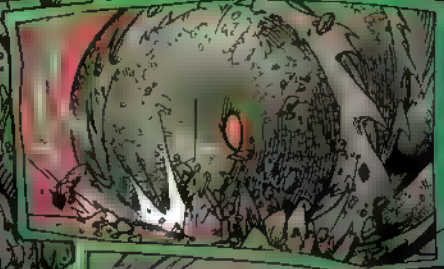
I COULDN'T SAVE HER FROM THE NIGHT-
MARES IN THE FOREST THAT OPENED
UP AND SWALLOWED HER WHOLE.

SOMEBODY SOMEWHERE HAS A NASTY
APPRECIATION FOR HISTORY.



NO!!!

BETHANY!!!!



I'VE SEEN A LOT IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS,
BUT I NEVER ONCE THOUGHT THE
DEVIL WAS REAL. NEVER ONCE.

THAT JUST CHANGED.

YOU CAN'T
SAVE THEM,
ARIEL!!!!

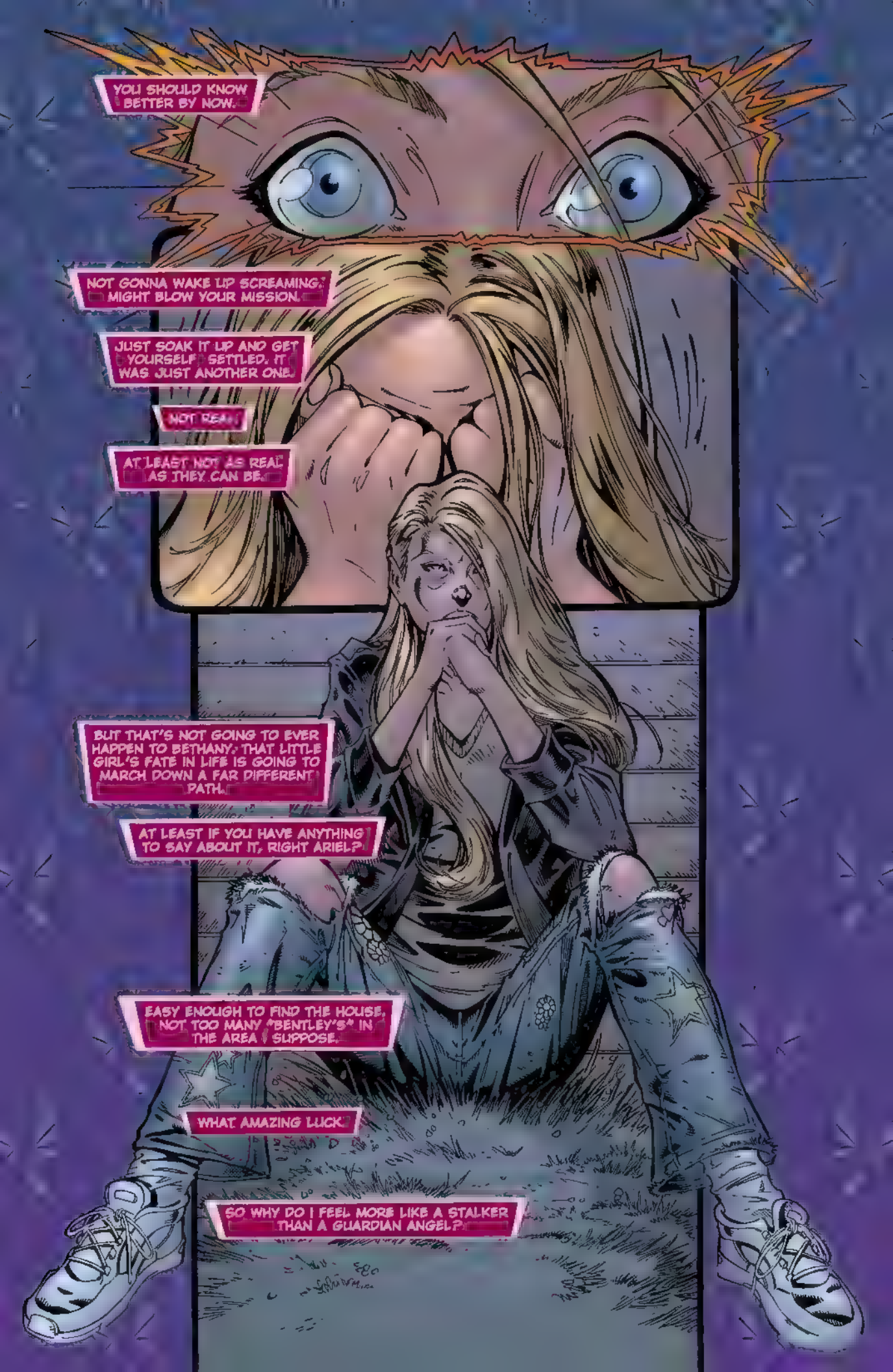
YOU CAN'T EVEN
SAVE YOURSELF!!!!
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO
DID THIS TO YOU, DO YOU?/P
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHO
WAS RESPONSIBLE...

LEAVE THEM
ALONE YOU BASTARD!!
IF IT'S ME YOU WANT,
I'M RIGHT HERE!!!!

OH REST
ASSURED, YOUNG
ONE...

I'LL
SAVE ROOM
FOR YOU

I'LL
KILL YOU!!!



YOU SHOULD KNOW
BETTER BY NOW.

NOT GONNA WAKE UP SCREAMING.
MIGHT BLOW YOUR MISSION.

JUST SOAK IT UP AND GET
YOURSELF SETTLED. IT
WAS JUST ANOTHER ONE.

NOT REAL.

AT LEAST NOT AS REAL
AS THEY CAN BE.

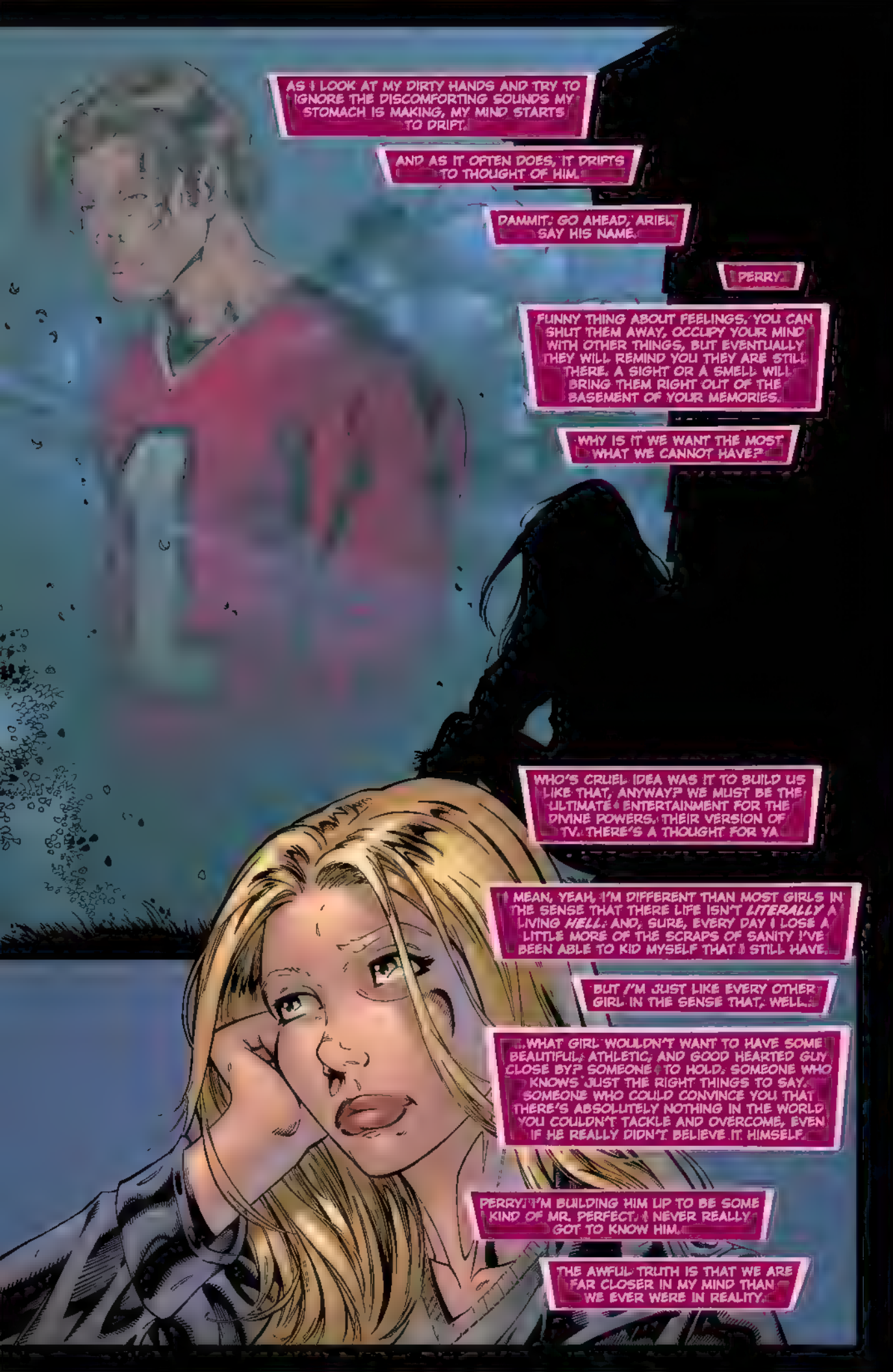
BUT THAT'S NOT GOING TO EVER
HAPPEN TO BETHANY. THAT LITTLE
GIRL'S FATE IN LIFE IS GOING TO
MARCH DOWN A FAR DIFFERENT
PATH.

AT LEAST IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING
TO SAY ABOUT IT, RIGHT ARIEL?

EASY ENOUGH TO FIND THE HOUSE,
NOT TOO MANY "BENTLEY'S" IN
THE AREA I SUPPOSE.

WHAT AMAZING LUCK.

SO WHY DO I FEEL MORE LIKE A STALKER
THAN A GUARDIAN ANGEL?



AS I LOOK AT MY DIRTY HANDS AND TRY TO
IGNORE THE DISCOMFORTING SOUNDS MY
STOMACH IS MAKING, MY MIND STARTS
TO DRIFT.

AND AS IT OFTEN DOES, IT DRIFTS
TO THOUGHT OF HIM.

DAMMIT, GO AHEAD, ARIEL.
SAY HIS NAME.

PERRY.

FUNNY THING ABOUT FEELINGS, YOU CAN
SHUT THEM AWAY, OCCUPY YOUR MIND
WITH OTHER THINGS, BUT EVENTUALLY
THEY WILL REMIND YOU THEY ARE STILL
THERE. A SIGHT OR A SMELL WILL
BRING THEM RIGHT OUT OF THE
BASEMENT OF YOUR MEMORIES.

WHY IS IT WE WANT THE MOST
WHAT WE CANNOT HAVE?

WHO'S CRUEL IDEA WAS IT TO BUILD US
LIKE THAT, ANYWAY? WE MUST BE THE
ULTIMATE ENTERTAINMENT FOR THE
DIVINE POWERS, THEIR VERSION OF
TV. THERE'S A THOUGHT FOR YA.

MEAN, YEAH, I'M DIFFERENT THAN MOST GIRLS IN
THE SENSE THAT THERE LIFE ISN'T *LITERALLY* A
LIVING HELL. AND, SURE, EVERY DAY I LOSE A
LITTLE MORE OF THE SCRAPS OF SANITY I'VE
BEEN ABLE TO KID MYSELF THAT I STILL HAVE.

BUT I'M JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER
GIRL IN THE SENSE THAT, WELL...

...WHAT GIRL WOULDN'T WANT TO HAVE SOME
BEAUTIFUL, ATHLETIC, AND GOOD HEARTED GUY
CLOSE BY? SOMEONE TO HOLD. SOMEONE WHO
KNOWS JUST THE RIGHT THINGS TO SAY.
SOMEONE WHO COULD CONVINCE YOU THAT
THERE'S ABSOLUTELY NOTHING IN THE WORLD
YOU COULDN'T TACKLE AND OVERCOME, EVEN
IF HE REALLY DIDN'T BELIEVE IT HIMSELF.

PERRY, I'M BUILDING HIM UP TO BE SOME
KIND OF MR. PERFECT. I NEVER REALLY
GOT TO KNOW HIM.

THE AWFUL TRUTH IS THAT WE ARE
FAR CLOSER IN MY MIND THAN
WE EVER WERE IN REALITY.

NO, HE WAS ONLY AROUND LONG ENOUGH TO TEASE ME WITH SOME SORT OF PROMISED PERFECTION. HAD LIFE NOT GOTTEN IN THE WAY.

LIFE AND DEATH. ACTUALLY. EMPHASIS ON THE LATTER.

HIS TIMING WAS PERFECT. "A: ABIEL, YES, I KNOW I'M GORGEOUS, AND WITH A GREAT BODY, BUT... THAT ASIDE, YOU'LL BE BOTH SURPRISED AND DELIGHTED TO DISCOVER THAT I ACTUALLY HAVE A DECENT HEART AND A CARING, COMING-SKINATE SOUL TO GO ALONG WITH ALL THAT. HARD TO BELIEVE, ISN'T IT?"

I KNOW IT'S A LOT TO TAKE IN, BUT DON'T WORRY. I WON'T BE AROUND LONG ENOUGH FOR IT TO REALLY MATTER. I JUST WANTED TO SHOW UP LONG ENOUGH TO A: MAKE AN IMPRESSION, AND B: GIVE YOU SOME GLIMPSE AT WHAT YOU COULD HAVE HAD, HAD YOUR LIFE NOT DECIDED TO TAKE A FREEFALL RIGHT INTO THAT SPECIAL PLACE BEST DESCRIBED AS YOUR OWN PERSONAL HELL.

HAD I BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO NOT HAVE HAD ALL OF THIS HAPPEN TO ME? HAD I BEEN LUCKY ENOUGH TO ACTUALLY HAVE HAD THE TIME TO GET TO KNOW MORE OF HIM THAN THE FACT THAT HE MAKES A MEAN CHICKEN SOUP, THE IRONY IS THAT HE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE TURNED OUT TO BE JUST ANOTHER SELF-ABSORBED JERK.

A VERY GOOD-LOOKING JERK MIND YOU, BUT A JERK NONE-THELESS, WHO WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE CONCERNED WITH THE MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL STATS THAN LETTING ME PICK WHATEVER MOVIE WE WERE SUPPOSED TO SEE THAT NIGHT.

YOU CERTAINLY SAW MY BAD SIDE, DIDN'T YOU, PERRY? BUT I WAS NEVER EVEN ALLOWED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SEE YOURS. AND, SINCE I NEVER GOT TO EXPERIENCE THE ALTERNATIVE DYNAMIC, I GUESS I'M JUST OTTUK HAVING TO REMEMBER YOU AS BEING SOMETHING VERY CLOSE TO PERFECT, PERRY.

DAMMIT.

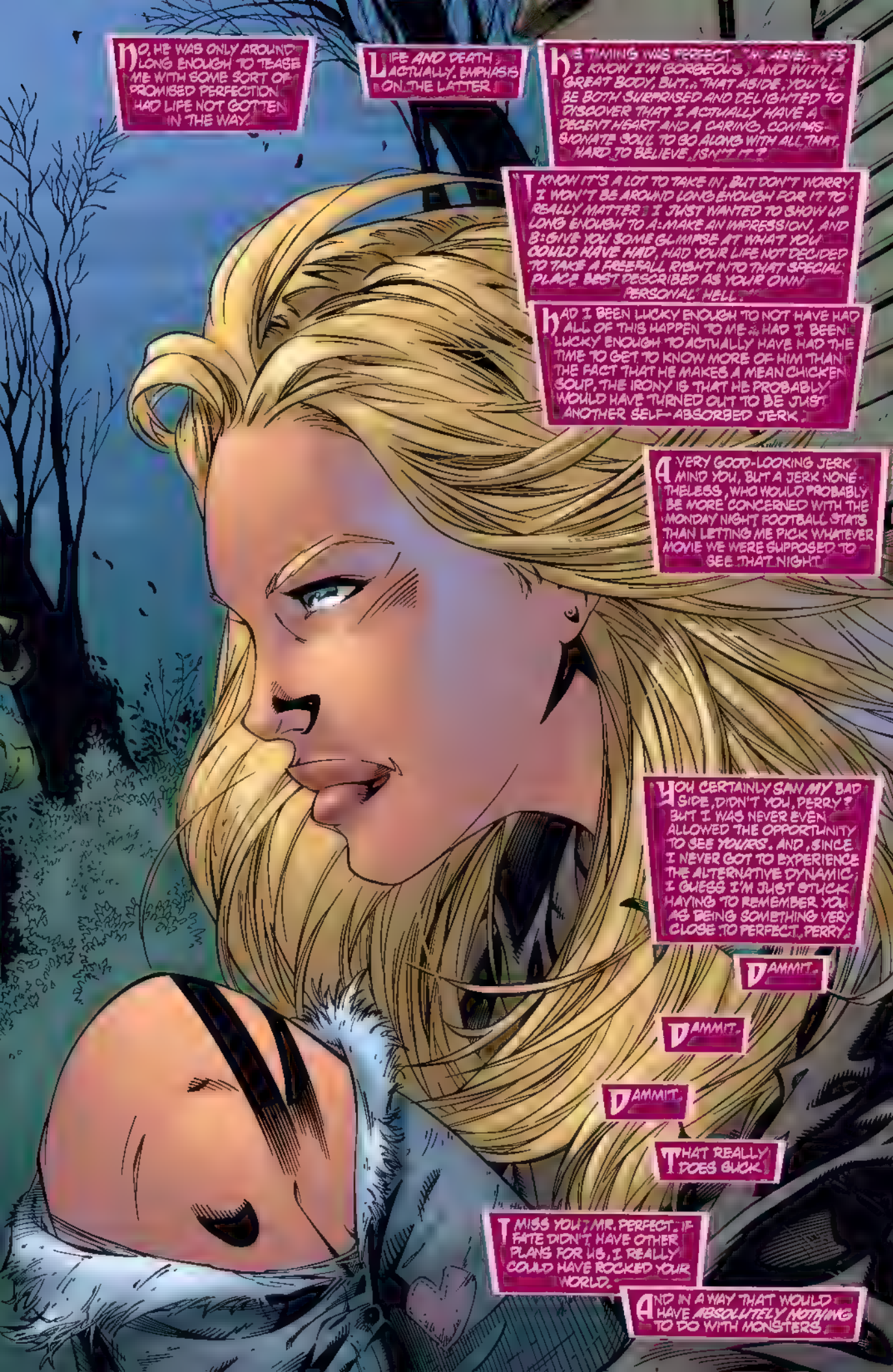
DAMMIT.

DAMMIT.

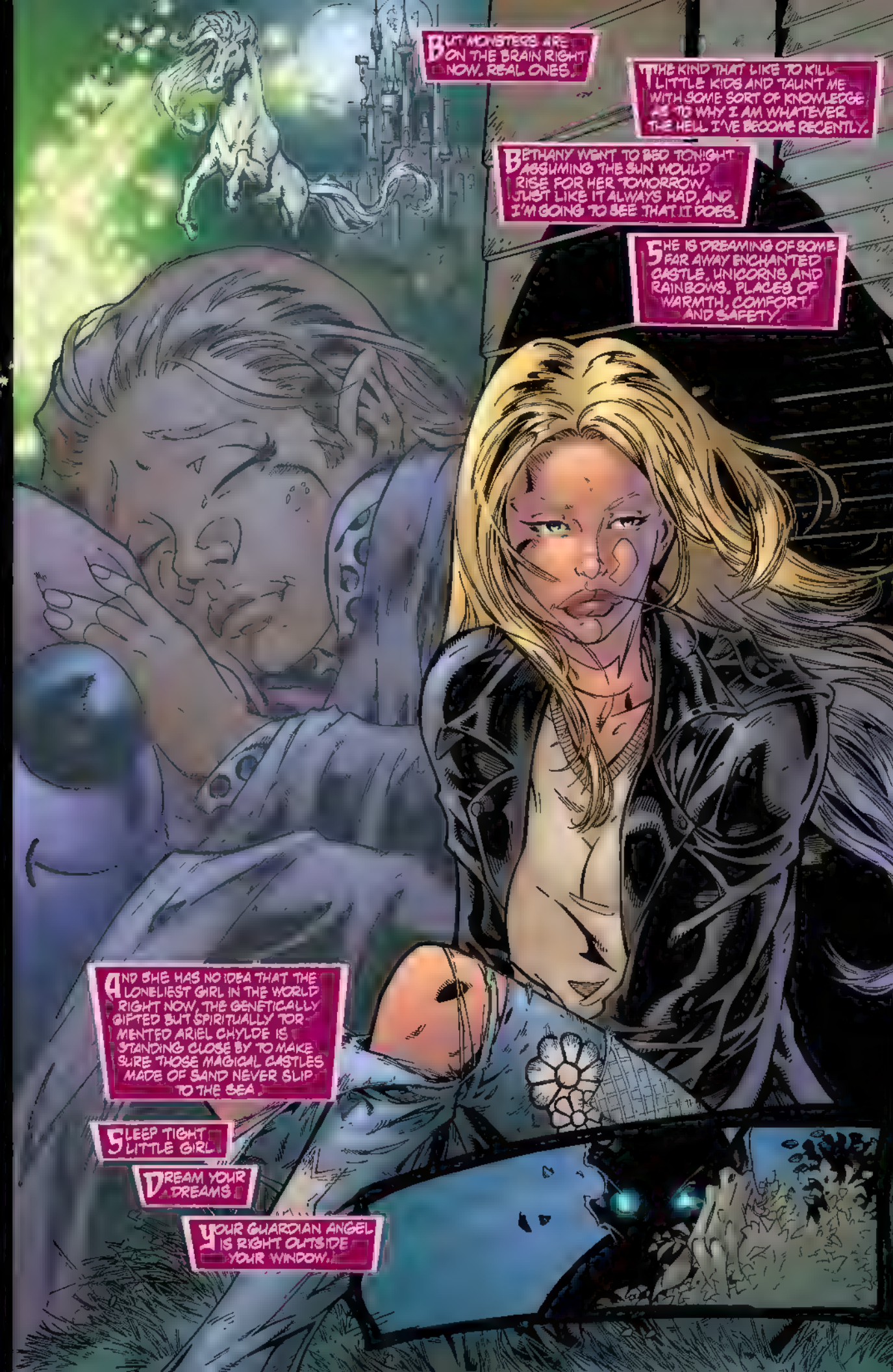
THAT REALLY DOES SUCK.

I MISS YOU, MR. PERFECT. IF FATE DIDN'T HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR US, I REALLY COULD HAVE ROCKED YOUR WORLD.

AND IN A WAY THAT WOULD HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH MONSTERS.





A comic book illustration featuring Ariel and Ariel Chylde. Ariel is on the left, lying down with her eyes closed, wearing a blue seashell bikini top. Ariel Chylde is on the right, sitting up and looking towards the viewer, wearing a black and white patterned jacket. In the background, a white unicorn is visible. The scene is set outdoors with trees and a building in the distance.

BUT MONSTERS ARE
ON THE BRAIN RIGHT
NOW. REAL ONES.

THE KIND THAT LIKE TO KILL
LITTLE KIDS AND TAUNT ME
WITH SOME SORT OF KNOWLEDGE
AS TO WHY I AM WHATEVER
THE HELL I'VE BECOME RECENTLY.

BETHANY WENT TO BED TONIGHT
ASSUMING THE SUN WOULD
RISE FOR HER TOMORROW,
JUST LIKE IT ALWAYS HAD, AND
I'M GOING TO SEE THAT IT DOES.

SHE IS DREAMING OF SOME
FAR AWAY ENCHANTED
CASTLE, UNICORNS AND
RAINBOWS. PLACES OF
WARMTH, COMFORT
AND SAFETY.

AND SHE HAS NO IDEA THAT THE
LONELIEST GIRL IN THE WORLD
RIGHT NOW, THE GENETICALLY
GIFTED BUT SPIRITUALLY TOR-
MENTED ARIEL CHYLDE IS
STANDING CLOSE BY TO MAKE
SURE THOSE MAGICAL CASTLES
MADE OF SAND NEVER SLIP
TO THE SEA.

SLEEP TIGHT
LITTLE GIRL.

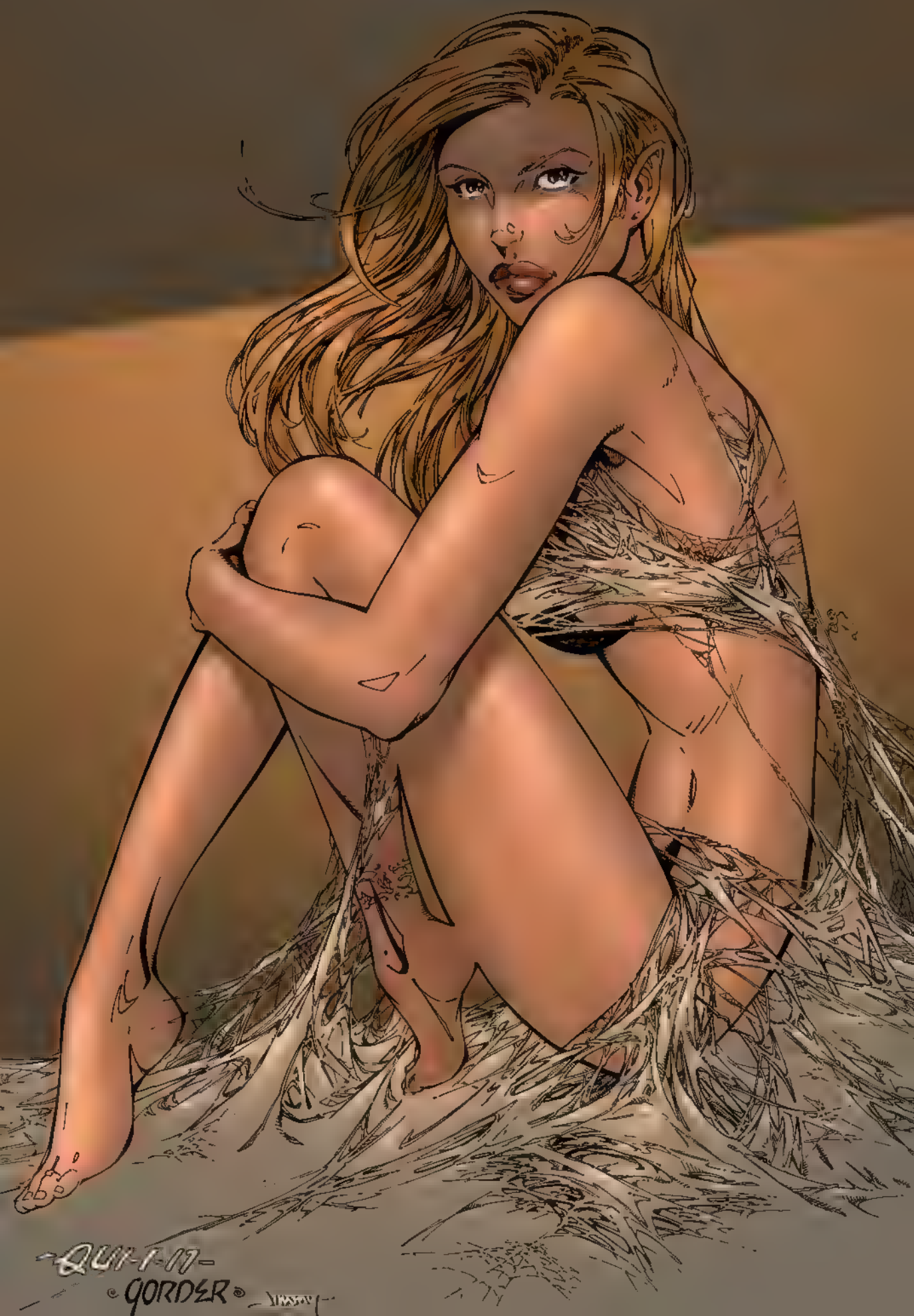
DREAM YOUR
DREAMS.

YOUR GUARDIAN ANGEL
IS RIGHT OUTSIDE
YOUR WINDOW.

AND THE DEVIL HIMSELF...
WOULDN'T PULL ME AWAY!



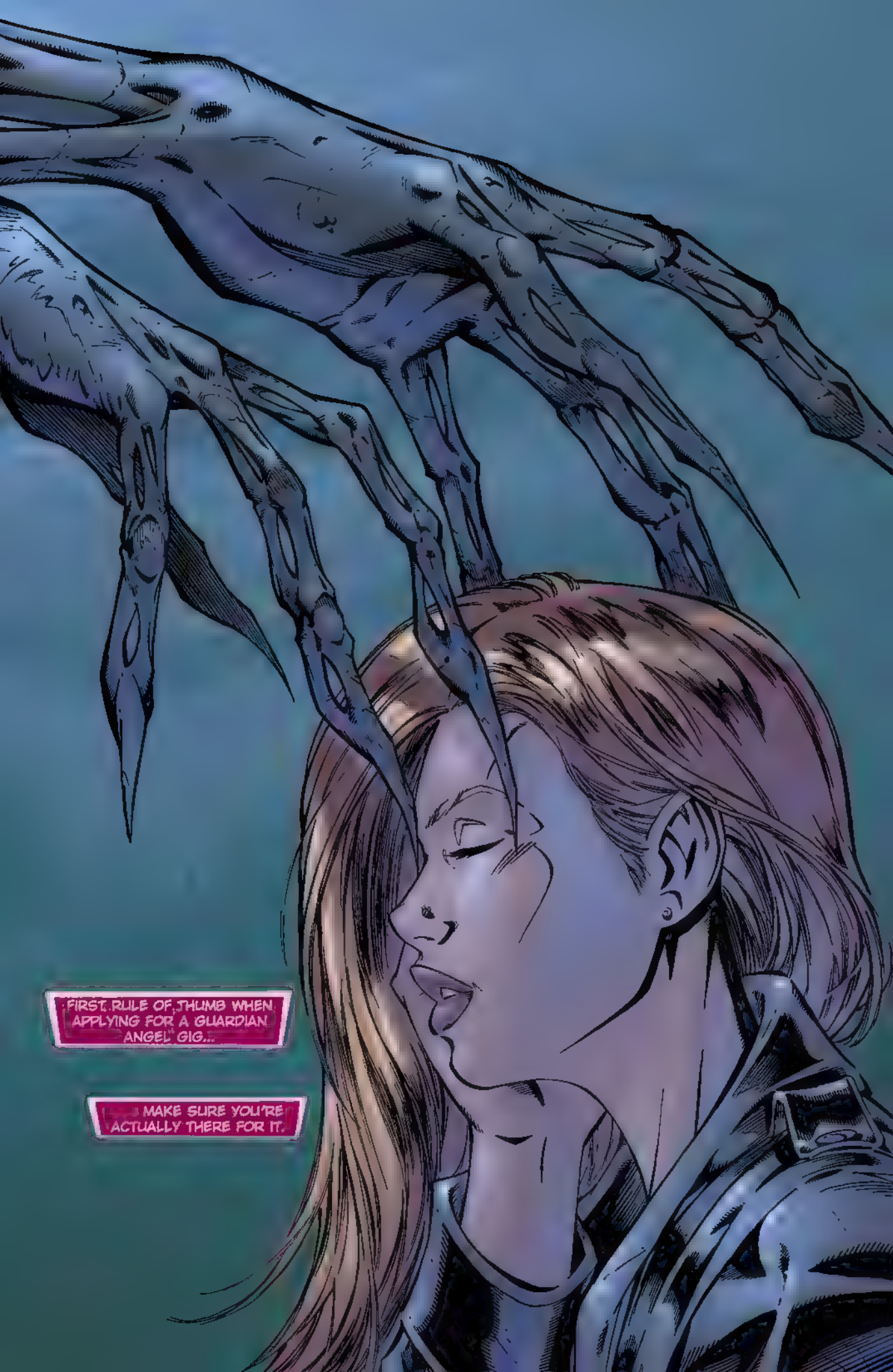
TO BE
CONTINUED



-QUI-17-

• GORDER •

YWYV



FIRST RULE OF THUMB WHEN
APPLYING FOR A GUARDIAN
ANGEL GIG...

MAKE SURE YOU'RE
ACTUALLY THERE FOR IT.

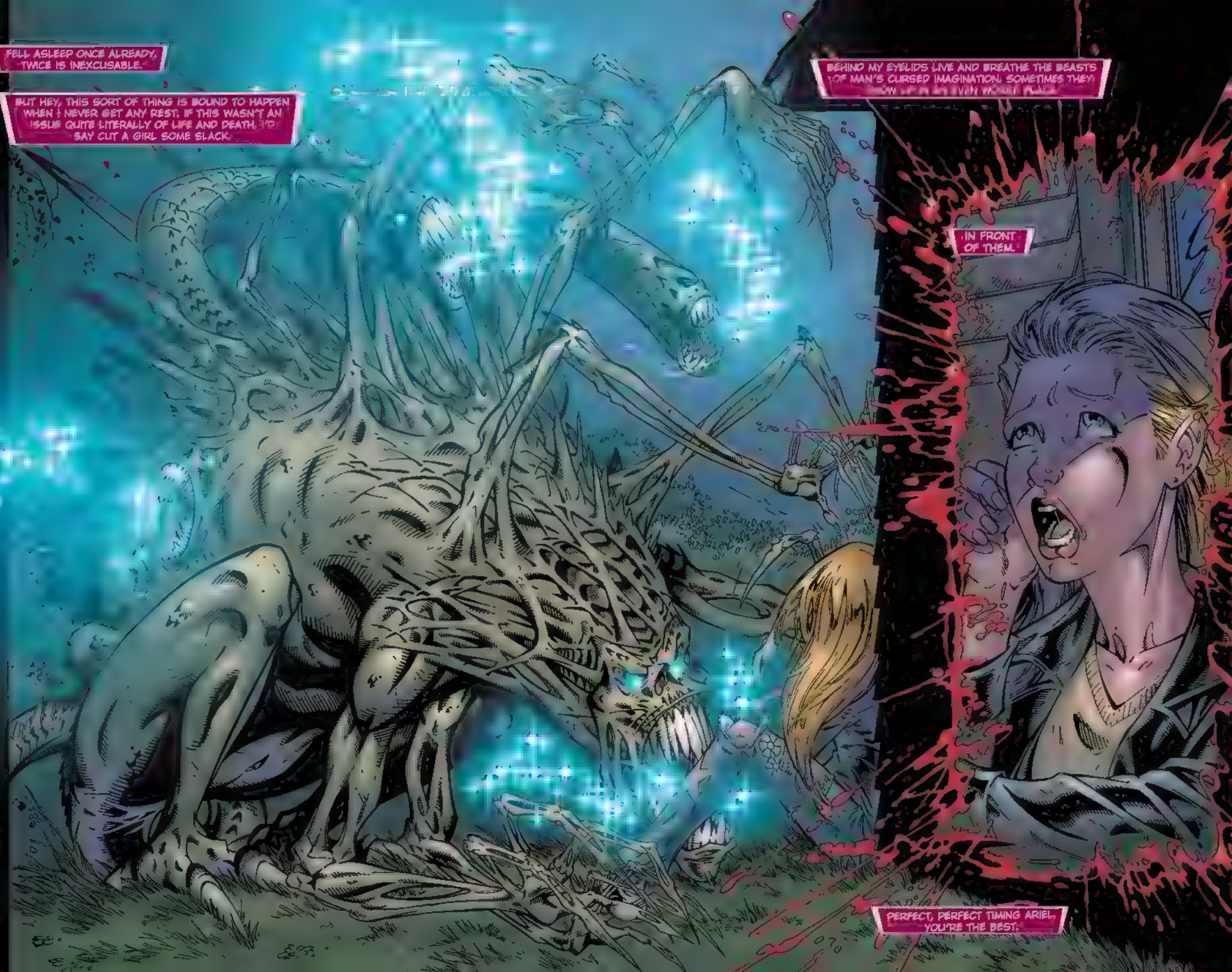
FELL ASLEEP ONCE ALREADY,
TWICE IS INEXCUSABLE.

BUT HEY, THIS SORT OF THING IS BOUND TO HAPPEN
WHEN I NEVER GET ANY REST. IF THIS WASN'T AN
ISSUE QUITE LITERALLY OF LIFE AND DEATH, I'D
SAY CUT A GIRL SOME SLACK.

BEHIND MY EYELIDS LIVE AND BREATHE THE BEASTS
OF MAN'S CURSED IMAGINATION. SOMETIMES THEY
SHOW UP IN AN EVEN WORSE PLACE.

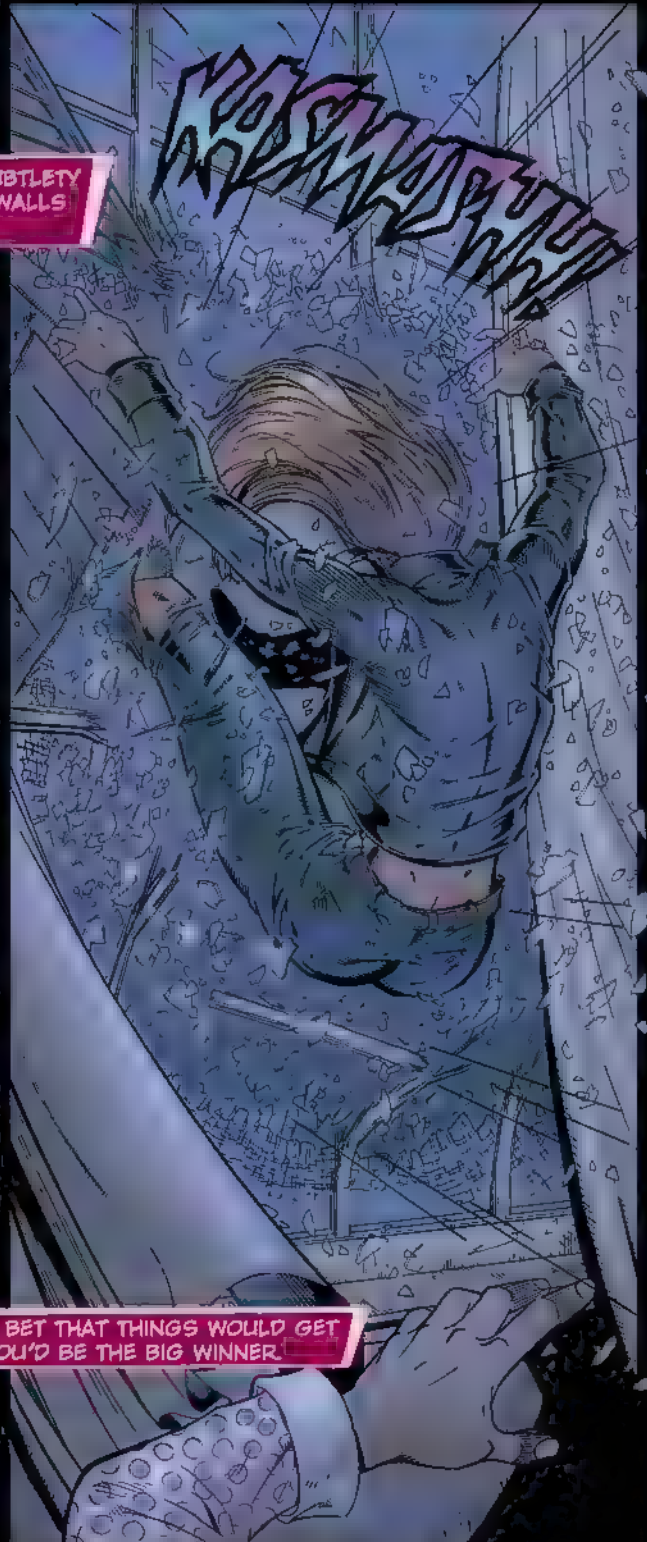
IN FRONT
OF THEM.

PERFECT, PERFECT TIMING ARIEL,
YOU'RE THE BEST.

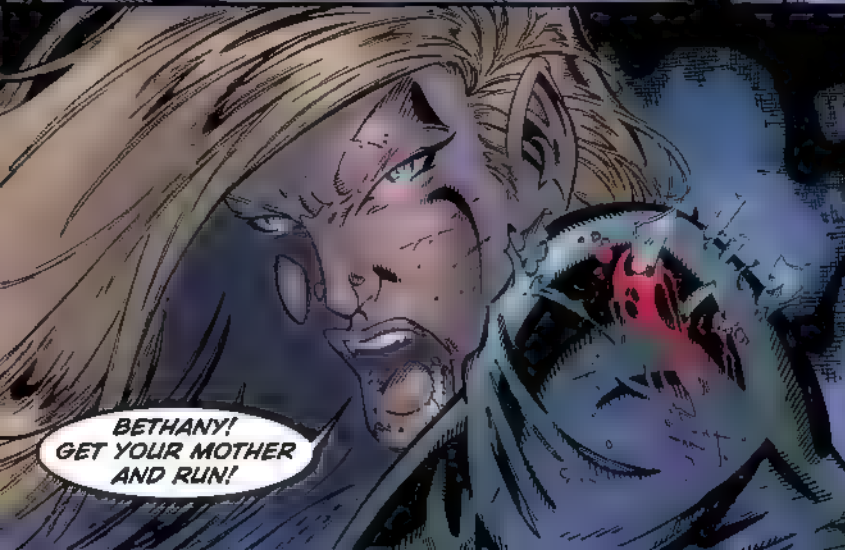


THAT GIRL FREAKING OUT RIGHT NOW IS BETHANY. I HAD A SNEAKY SUSPICION THAT SHE WOULD BE TARGETED AND THAT THE CHILD KILLER "SILENCER" WOULD SHOW ITSELF AGAIN.

WELL, YOU AIN'T SEEN NOTHING YET LITTLE GIRL. SUBTLETY IS A STRANGER TONIGHT, AND IT'S BALLS TO THE WALLS. INSANITY, YOU CAN COUNT ON IT.



IF YOU HAD A BET THAT THINGS WOULD GET NASTY YOU'D BE THE BIG WINNER.



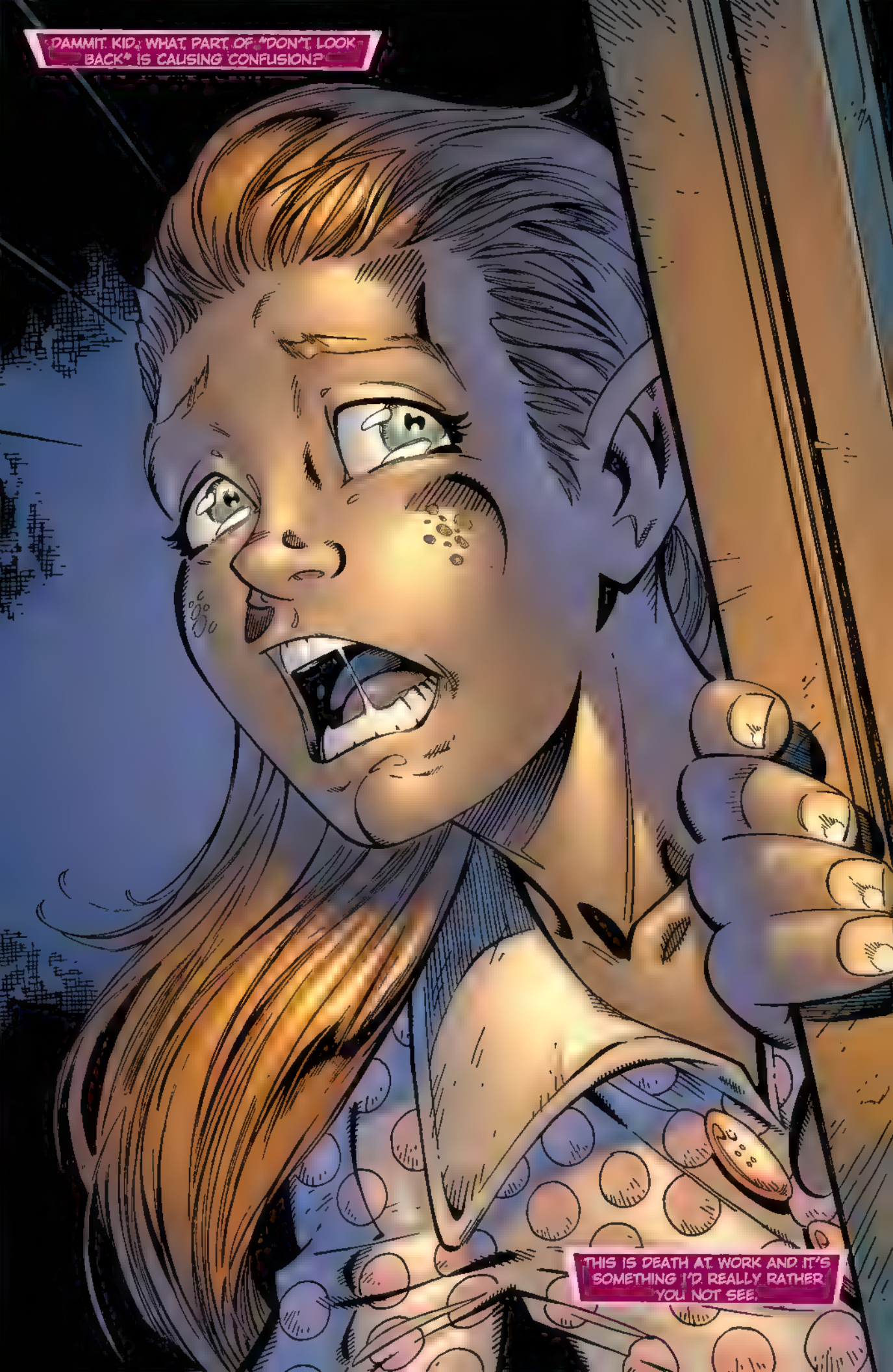
BETHANY!
GET YOUR MOTHER
AND RUN!



DON'T
LOOK BACK!

I'VE BEEN WAITING A
LONG TIME FOR THIS!

DAMMIT, KID, WHAT PART OF "DON'T LOOK BACK" IS CAUSING CONFUSION?



THIS IS DEATH AT WORK AND IT'S SOMETHING I'D REALLY RATHER YOU NOT SEE.

BUT, IF LOOK, YOU MUST,
HERE IT COMES.

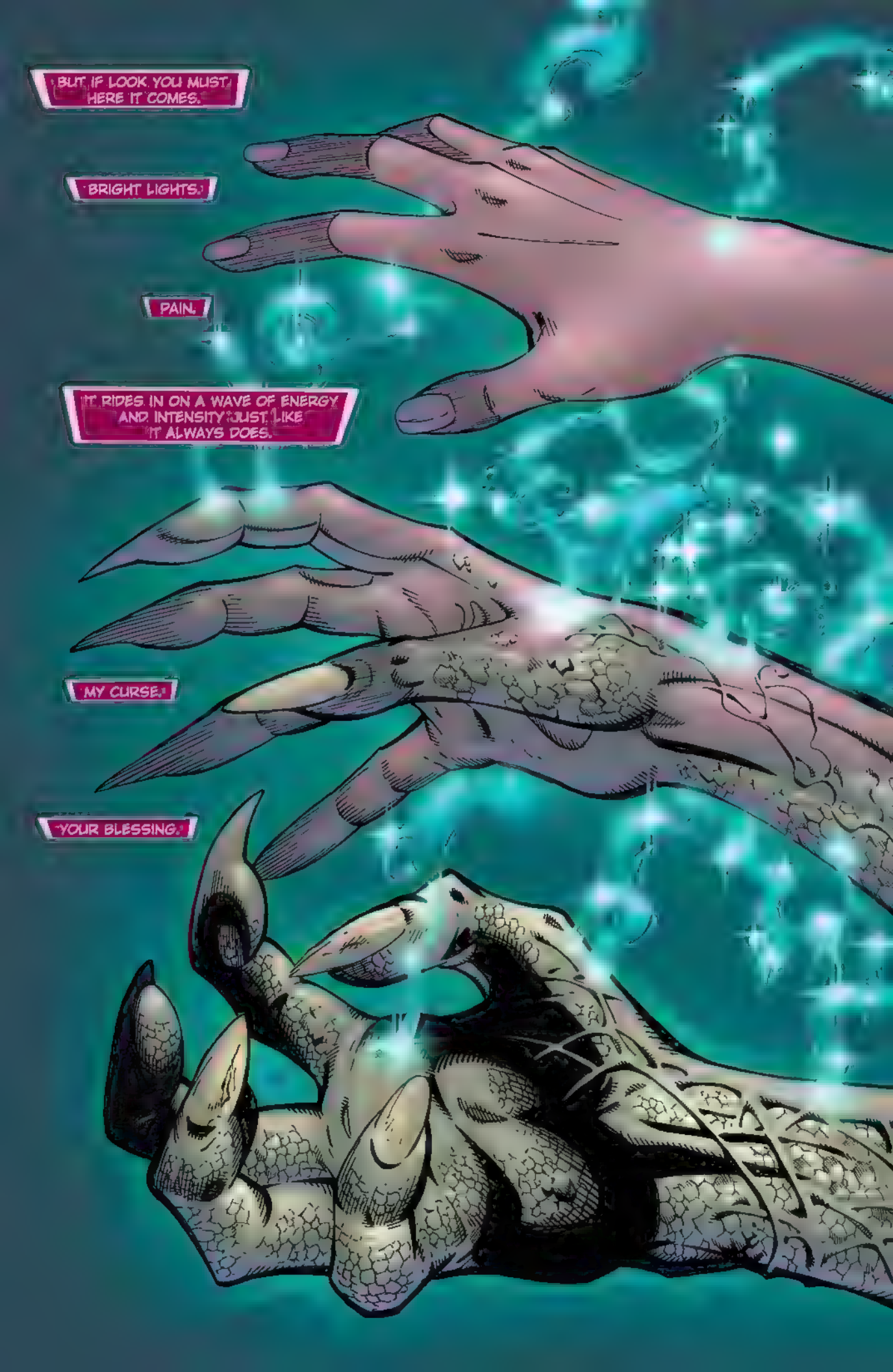
BRIGHT LIGHTS.

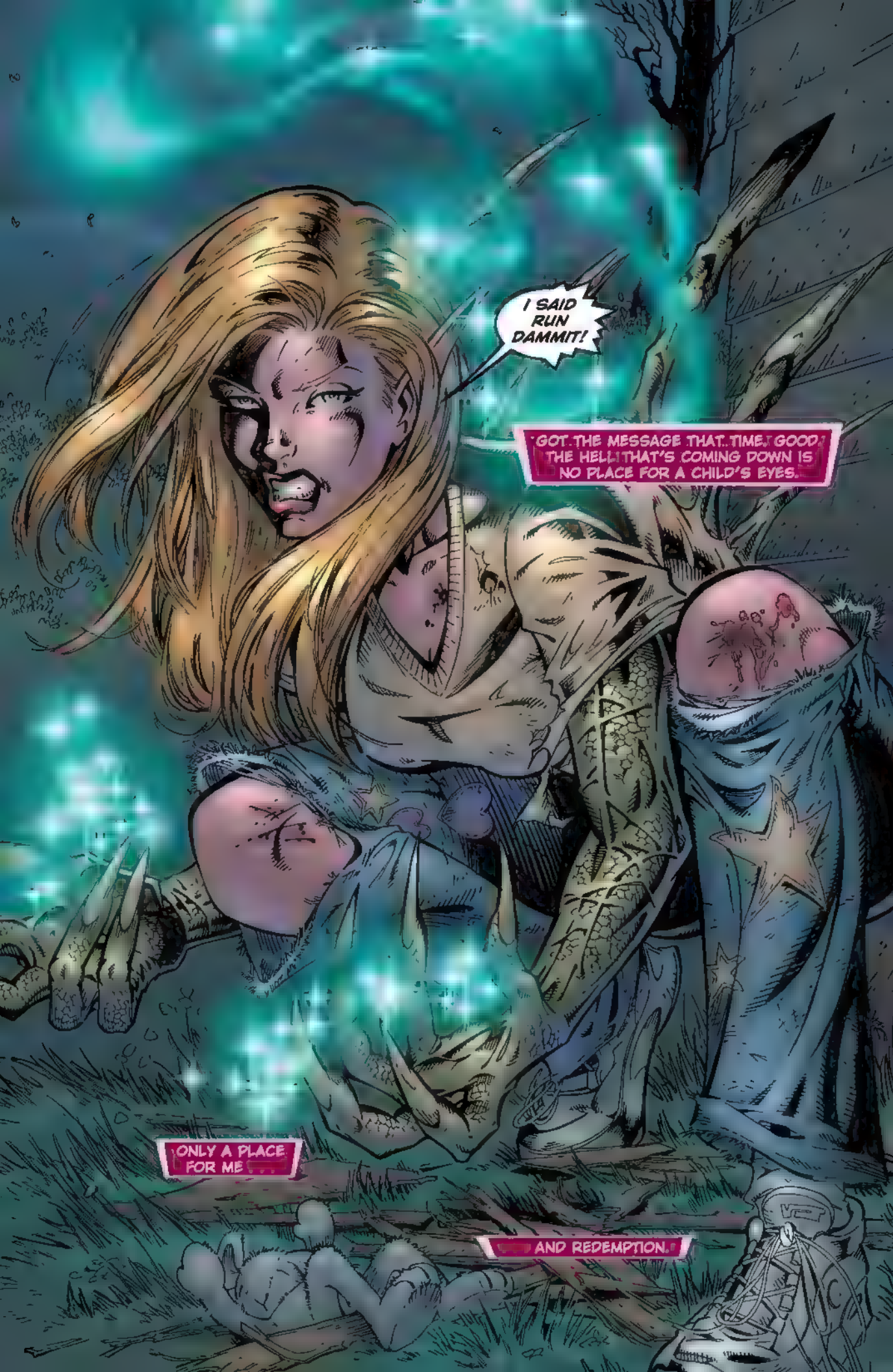
PAIN.

IT RIDES IN ON A WAVE OF ENERGY
AND INTENSITY, JUST LIKE
IT ALWAYS DOES.

MY CURSE.

YOUR BLESSING.





I SAID
RUN
DAMMIT!

GOT THE MESSAGE THAT TIME, GOOD!
THE HELL THAT'S COMING DOWN IS
NO PLACE FOR A CHILD'S EYES.

ONLY A PLACE
FOR ME

AND REDEMPTION.

ABOUT
TIME YOU SHOWED
YOURSELF YOU FREAKIN'
COWARD!

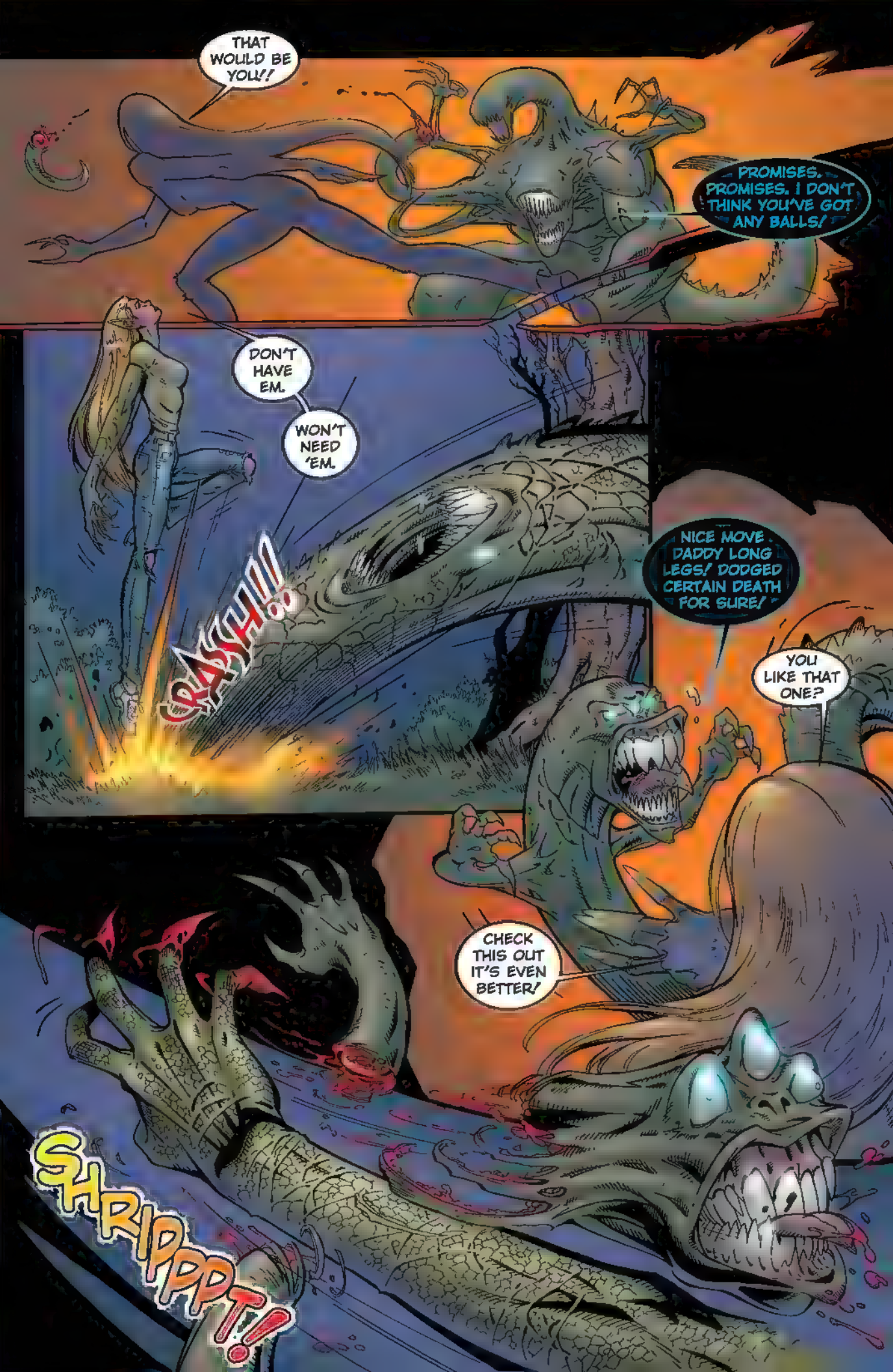
YESSSSSSSS.
AT LAST WE DANCE,
MY ARIEL!!!!!!

AND
ONE OF US
GETS TO
DIE!

ARRRGGH!

SLAM!

SWAK!



THAT
WOULD BE
YOU!!

PROMISES.
PROMISES. I DON'T
THINK YOU'VE GOT
ANY BALLS!

DON'T
HAVE
EM.

WON'T
NEED
'EM.

CRASH!!!

NICE MOVE.
DADDY LONG
LEGS! DODGED
CERTAIN DEATH
FOR SURE!

YOU
LIKE THAT
ONE?

CHECK
THIS OUT
IT'S EVEN
BETTER!

SHRIIPPT!!

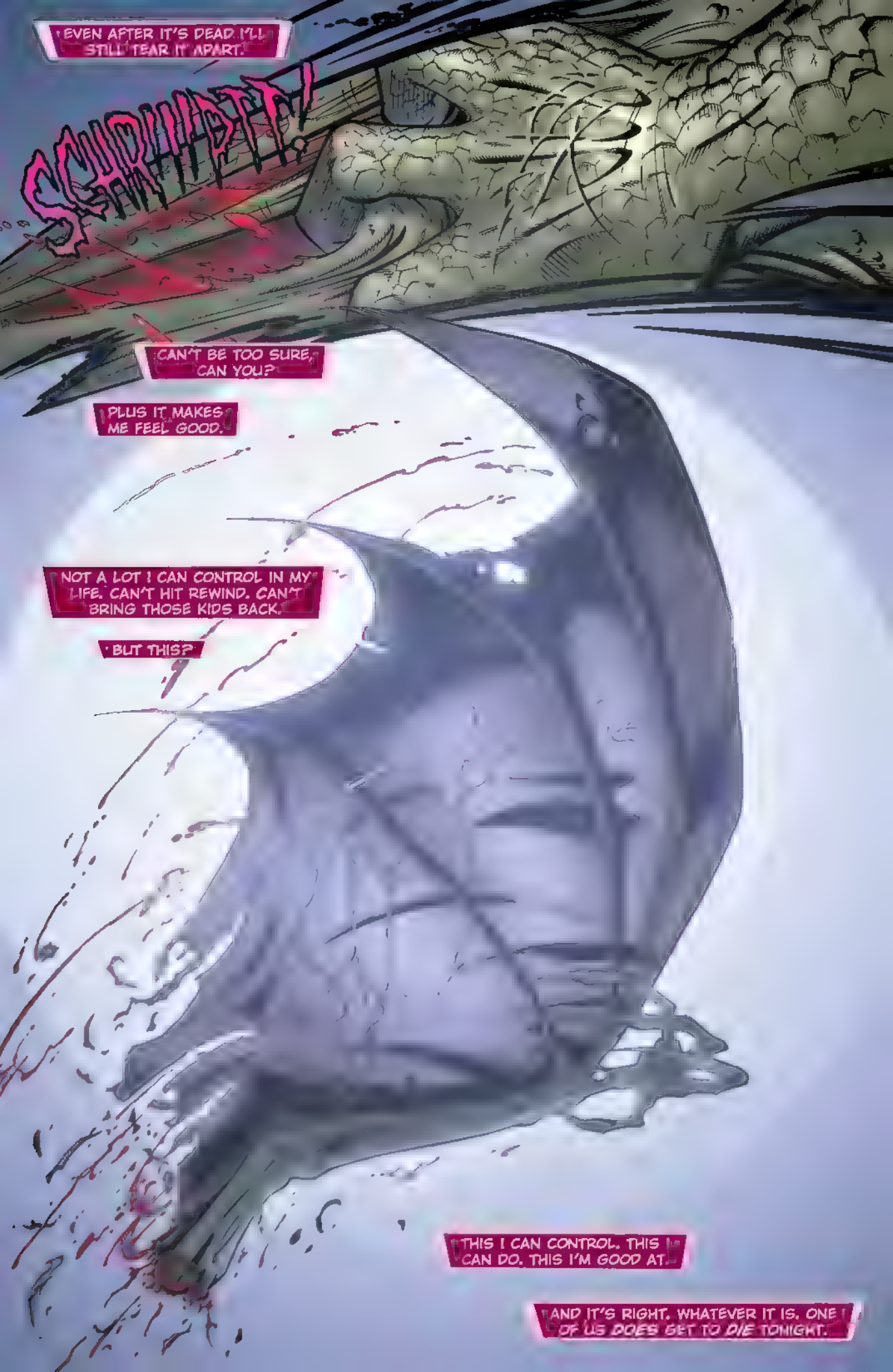
KEEPS SHIFTING AND MORPHING.
WHAT IS THIS THING?!

WINGS THIS
TIME. COOL.

MORE SHIT FOR ME TO RIP
AND SLASH INTO. THROW
IT AT ME, I DON'T CARE.



'CAUSE I'LL BE DAMNED AGAIN BEFORE
I'LL LET THIS THING WALK AWAY FROM
ME BREATHING.



EVEN AFTER IT'S DEAD, I'LL
STILL TEAR IT APART!

SCREECH!

CAN'T BE TOO SURE,
CAN YOU?

PLUS IT MAKES
ME FEEL GOOD.

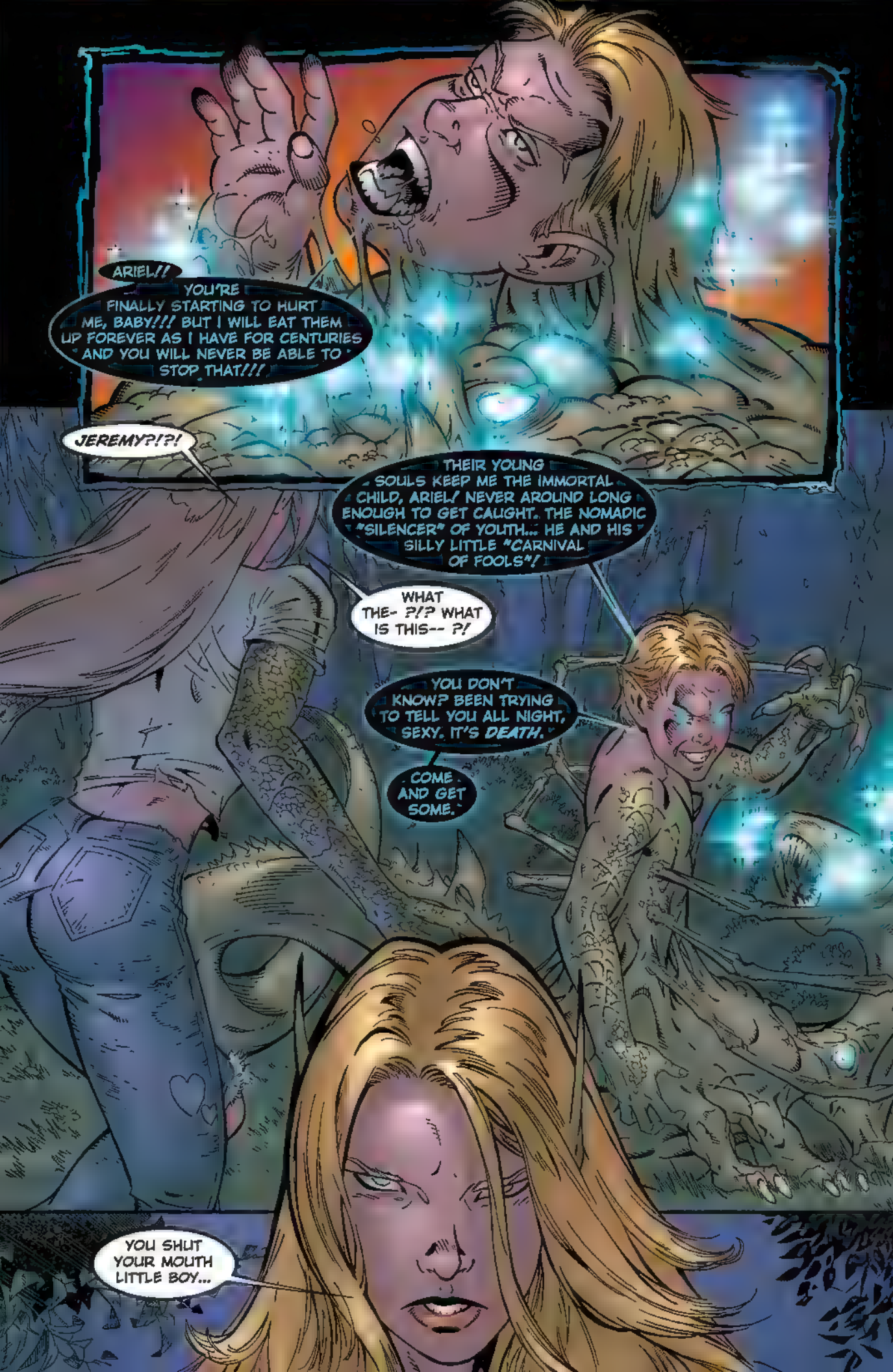
NOT A LOT I CAN CONTROL IN MY
LIFE. CAN'T HIT REWIND. CAN'T
BRING THOSE KIDS BACK.

BUT THIS?

THIS I CAN CONTROL. THIS
I CAN DO. THIS I'M GOOD AT.

AND IT'S RIGHT. WHATEVER IT IS, ONE
OF US DOES GET TO DIE TONIGHT.



Ariel is shown from the chest up, screaming with her mouth wide open and eyes squeezed shut. Her skin is covered in glowing blue energy or flames. Her right hand is raised, palm facing forward. The background is a dark, swirling mass of blue and white energy.

ARIEL!!

YOU'RE
FINALLY STARTING TO HURT
ME, BABY!!! BUT I WILL EAT THEM
UP FOREVER AS I HAVE FOR CENTURIES
AND YOU WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO
STOP THAT!!!

JEREMY?!?!

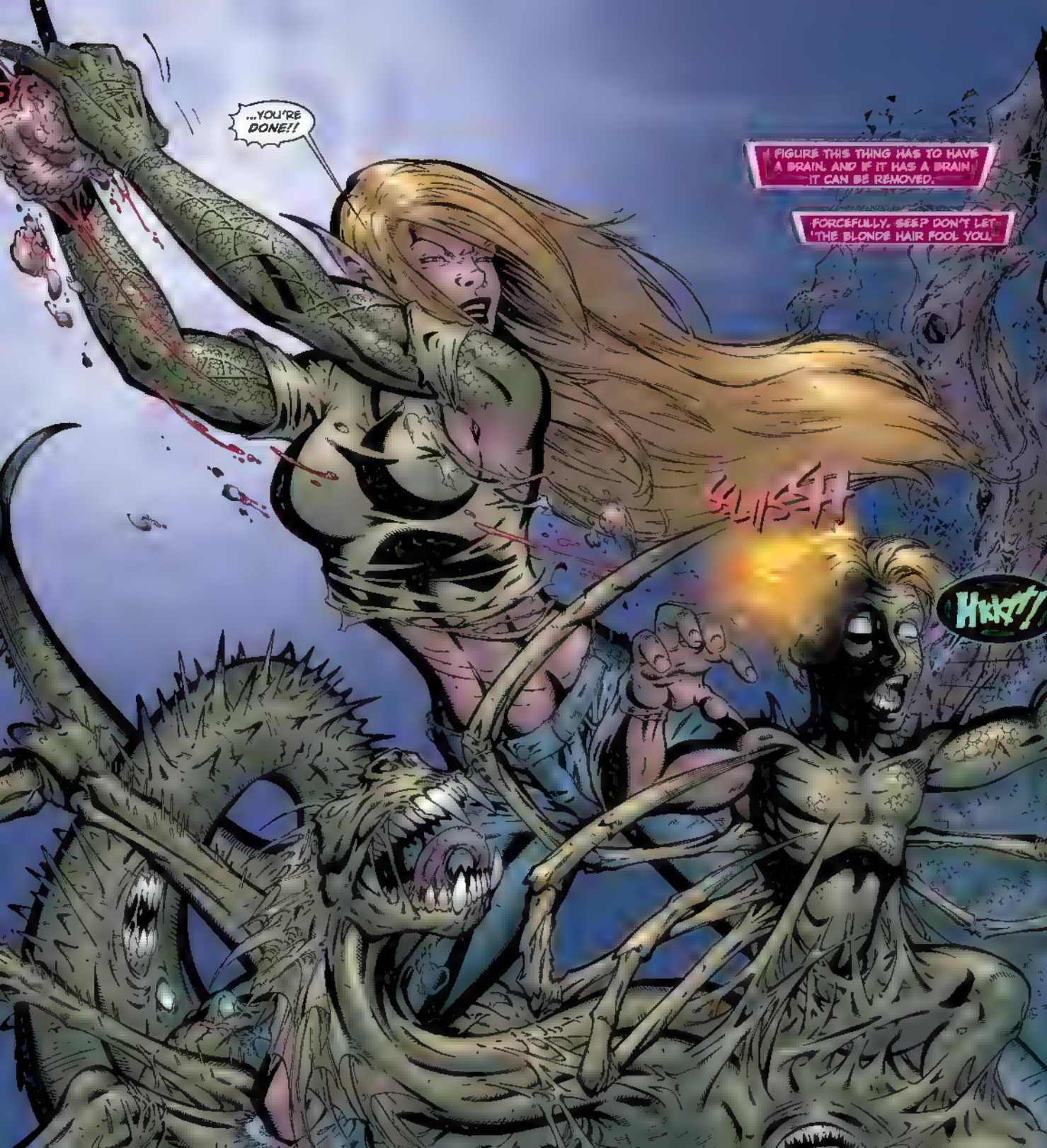
THEIR YOUNG
SOULS KEEP ME THE IMMORTAL
CHILD, ARIEL! NEVER AROUND LONG
ENOUGH TO GET CAUGHT. THE NOMADIC
"SILENCER" OF YOUTH... HE AND HIS
SILLY LITTLE "CARNIVAL
OF FOOLS"!

WHAT
THE- P/P WHAT
IS THIS-- P/

YOU DON'T
KNOW? BEEN TRYING
TO TELL YOU ALL NIGHT,
SEXY. IT'S DEATH.

COME
AND GET
SOME.

YOU SHUT
YOUR MOUTH
LITTLE BOY...



...YOU'RE DONE!!

FIGURE THIS THING HAS TO HAVE A BRAIN. AND IF IT HAS A BRAIN... IT CAN BE REMOVED.

FORCEFULLY. SLEEP DON'T LET 'THE BLONDE HAIR FOOL YOU'

SLASH

HKKY!

...GOOD...
...GIRL...

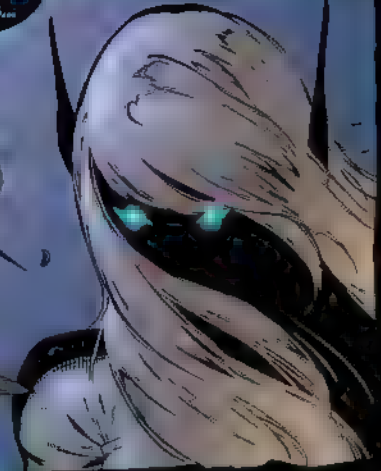
...I KNEW...
YOU'D BE THE ONE... EVEN...
IMMORTALS...

...GROW WEARY OF
THIS WORLD, ARIEL... A DEAL... WITH A DEVIL...
MADE ME YOUNG FOREVER... NEVER COUNTED...
THAT THE YEARS OF KILLING... THE VERY YOUTH
THAT I COVETED... WOULD DRIVE ME MAD...
MORE MAD, I SHOULD SAY...

YOU'VE...
SET ME FREE...
TONIGHT. AND...
ONE OF US...

GETS
TO DIE...

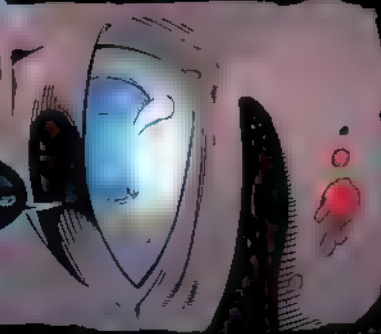
YOU LEFT
A NOTE ON A BOY
SAYING I WOULD KNOW
WHO CURSED ME IF I
FOUND YOU-P/P

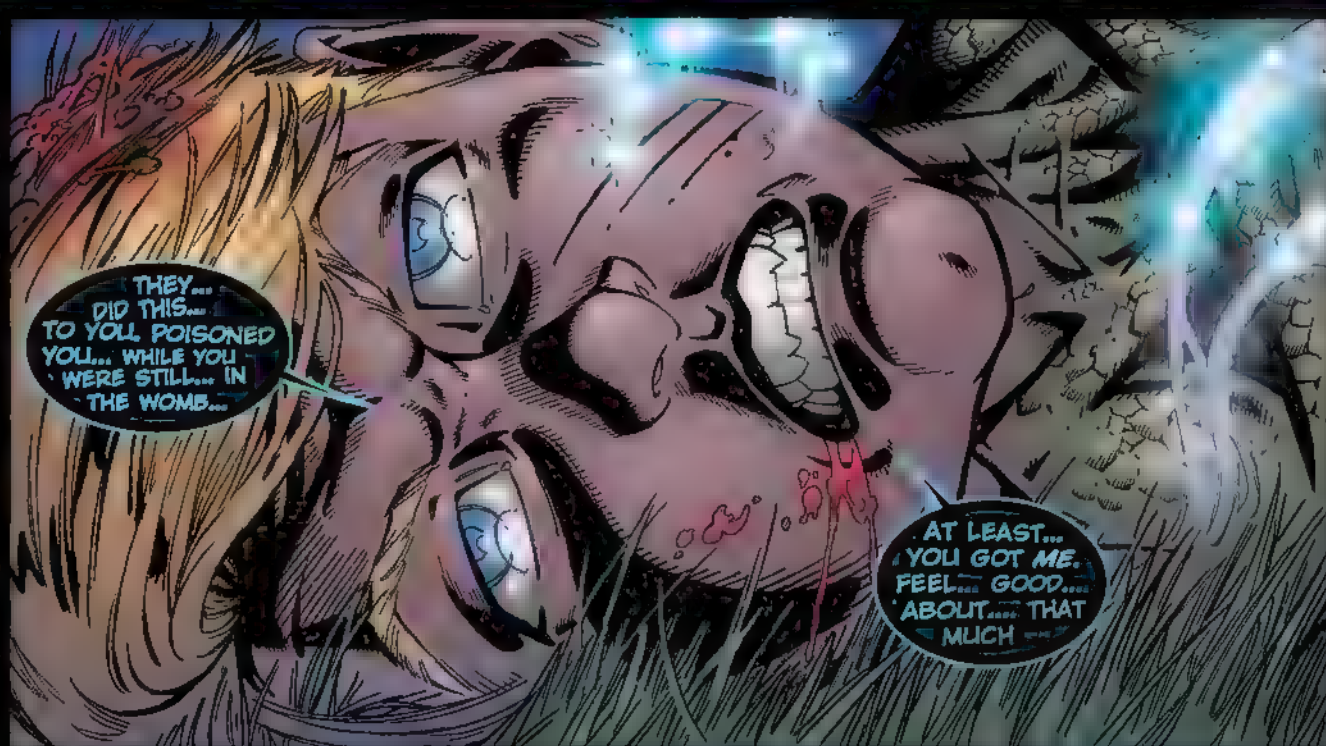


...YESSSSS...

...YOUR
MOTHER...
AND... HER AND
KALUDRON...

...ARE
THE ONES TO...
BLAME FOR YOUR
INSANITY.





THEY...
DID THIS...
TO YOU POISONED
YOU... WHILE YOU
WERE STILL... IN
THE WOMB...

AT LEAST...
YOU GOT ME.
FEEL... GOOD...
ABOUT... THAT
MUCH

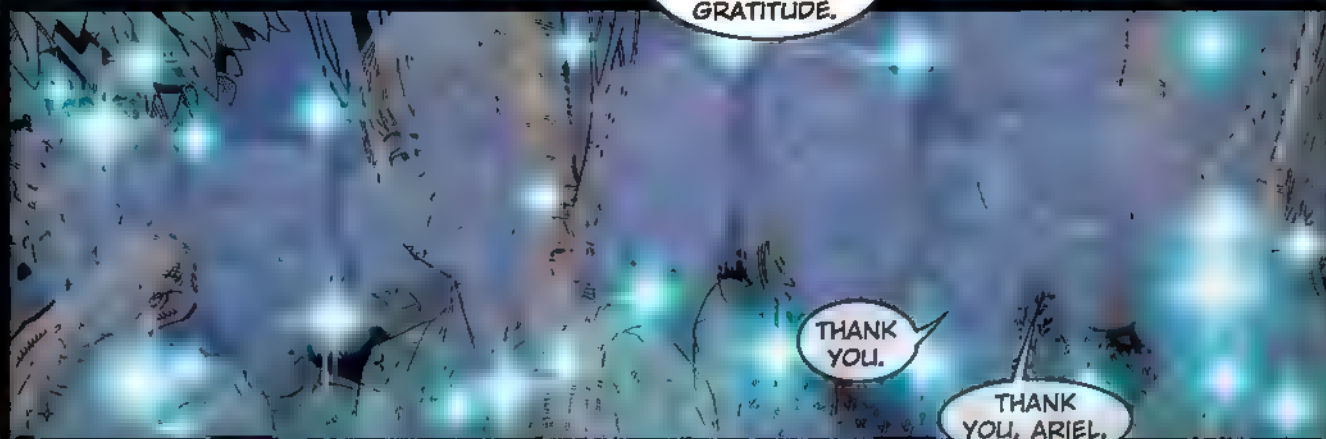


ARIEL...

...YOU
SET US FREE,
ARIEL...

...YOU
ARE OUR ETERNAL
SAVIOR...

...AND
YOU WILL HAVE
OUR ETERNAL
GRATITUDE.



THANK
YOU.

THANK
YOU, ARIEL.



THANK
YOU!

ARIEL!!!!



COME QUICK!

JEREMY'S MISSING FROM THE CARNIVAL!

WE'RE WORRIED SOMETHING BAD IS COMING DOWN!



YOU
WERE RIGHT
TO WORRY.

TO BE
CONTINUED



WE'RE TOO
LATE.

EVEN AFTER ALL OUR EFFORTS,
EVEN AFTER ALL THIS TIME.

IN MY HEART I FEEL IT.
IN MY GUT I KNOW IT.

WE WERE HER PROTECTORS AND WE FELL
SHORT TONIGHT. AFTER EVERYTHING FOR
IT TO END LIKE THIS, IT'S JUST...

...I KNOW WE'RE
TOO LATE.

BUT WE'LL
TRY.

WON'T MAKE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE,
THOUGH. IT ENDED HOURS AGO
AND THIS IS JUST US GOING
THROUGH THE MOTIONS, PAINFUL
AS IT IS.

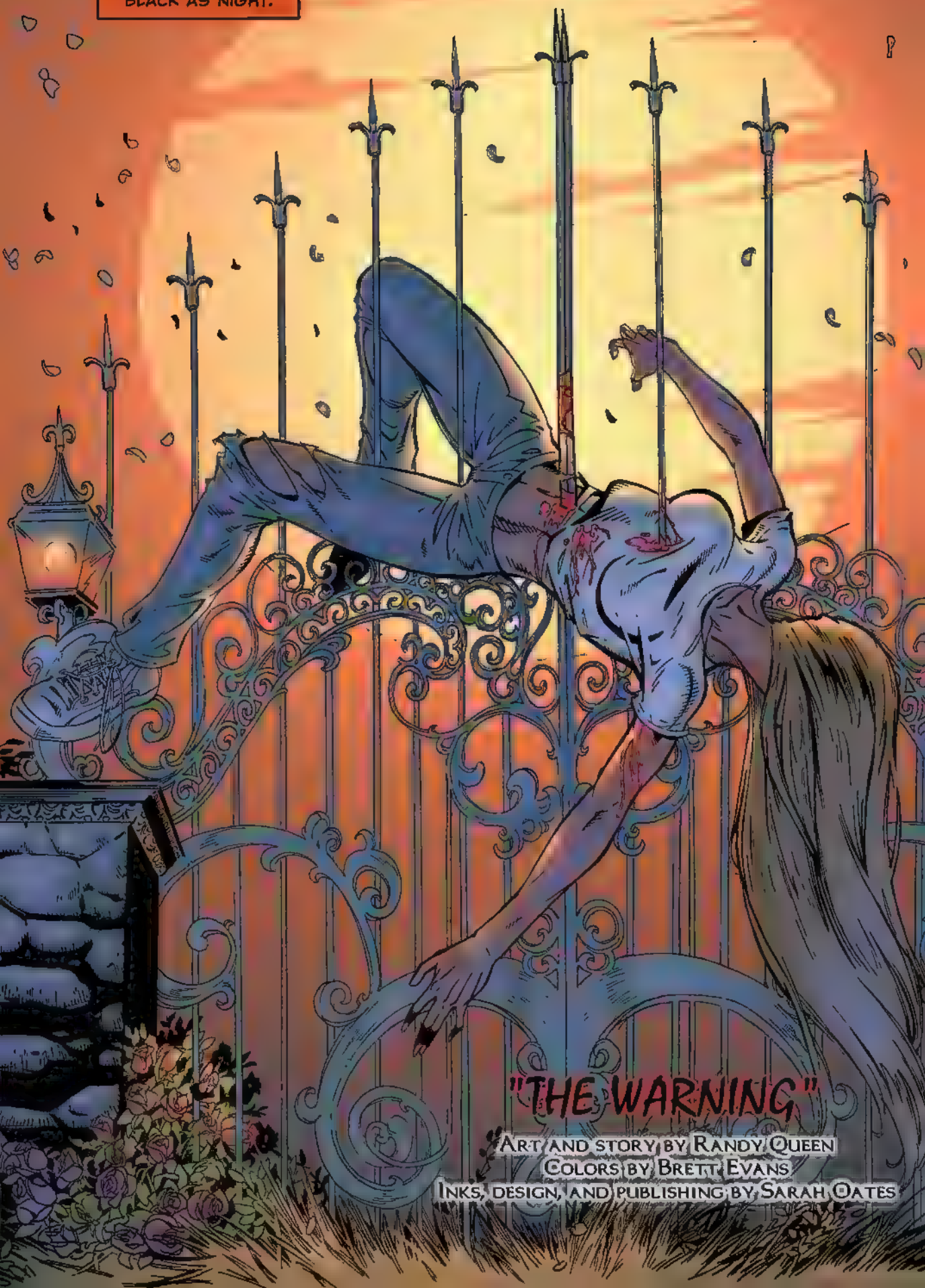
SHOULD HAVE NEVER LEFT HER ALONE.
NO WAY. NOT IN THE CONDITION SHE
WAS IN. BUT WE DID ANYWAY SO I
GUESS THIS IS WHAT WE DESERVE.

AND WHEN I FINALLY SEE THE SICKENING
TRUTH... LAID OPEN AND BLEEDING
BEFORE ME, IT STILL DOESN'T REGISTER.

NO!!!

BUT THERE IT IS.

PLAIN AS DAY AND
BLACK AS NIGHT.



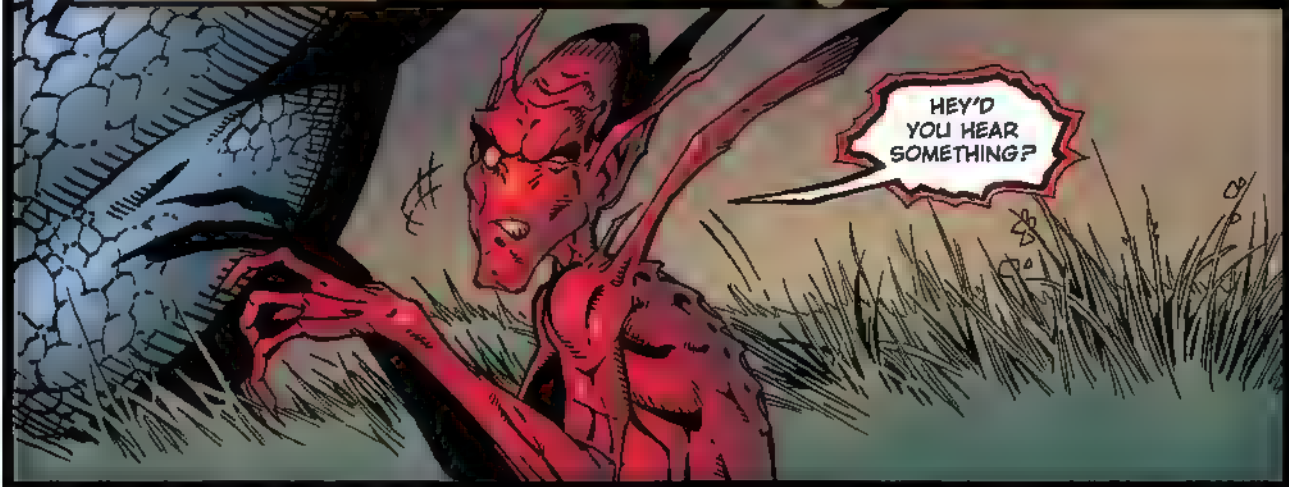
"THE WARNING"

ART AND STORY BY RANDY QUEEN

COLORS BY BRETT EVANS

INKS, DESIGN, AND PUBLISHING BY SARAH OATES





SOMEWHERE ELSE:

YOUR WORLD CAN
"CHANGE IN A DAY."

IN AN HOUR.

IN A HEARTBEAT.

THE CHOICES WE MAKE
ARE EVERYTHING, AND
SOMETIMES...

SOMETIMES THE CHOICES
OTHERS MAKE ARE
EVEN MORE.

THERE IS AN OLD CHINESE PROVERB WHICH SAYS
THE WORLD DOES NOT GO UNAFFECTED BY EVEN
THE SMALLEST OF BUTTERFLIES FLAPPING ITS
WINGS. CAUSE AND EFFECT.

SOME EFFECTS ARE UNNOTICEABLE, OF LITTLE OR
NO CONSEQUENCE, BUT SOME WILL RIPPLE
THROUGHOUT YOUR LIFE, SWEEPING AWAY
AND FOREVER ALTERING EVERYTHING THAT
THEY COME IN CONTACT WITH.

YOU TAUGHT ME MANY THINGS
MOTHER, THIS MOST OF ALL.

AND I COULDN'T HATE
YOU FOR IT MORE.

IT WASN'T FATE,
AFTER ALL.

IT WASN'T EVIL.

IT WASN'T DESTINY. IT HAD NOTHING
DO TO WITH RHYME OR ANYTHING
RESEMBLING REASON, YOU STUPID,
DESPERATE WOMAN.

IT WAS JUST YOU.

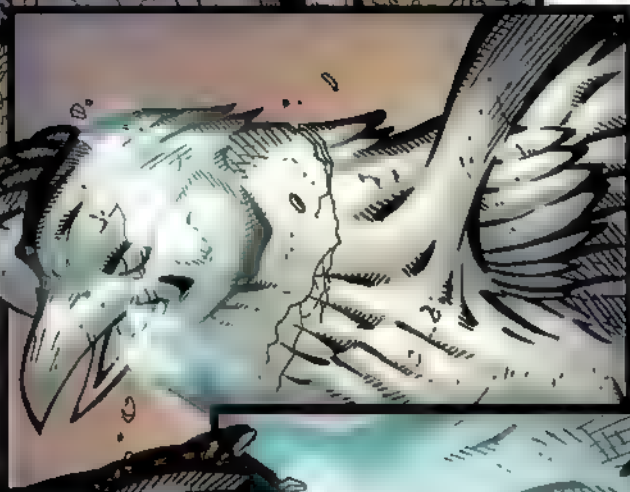


KNOW YOU'RE
HERE.

DON'T KNOW WHERE BUT I CAN
FEEL YOU WATCHING ME.

WAITING FOR JUST THE RIGHT
TIME TO MAKE YOUR
PRESENCE KNOWN...

...ISN'T THAT RIGHT
MOTHER?



I'VE COME
TO WARN YOU
ARIEL.





I JUST WANT
TO KNOW THE ANSWER
TO ONE THING. WHY'D
YOU DO IT?/?

A DARK AND
TERRIBLE DANGER IS
CLOSE... IT IS ALMOST
UPON YOU.

FIGURED IT OUT
ON MY OWN. WAS A LITTLE
KID THAT KILLED OTHER LITTLE
KIDS TO STAY YOUNG FOREVER.
I TOOK CARE OF IT.* NOW
ANSWER THE QUESTION/

A MUCH
GREATER THREAT
IS NEAR.

Ariel is shown in a graveyard, looking up in shock and fear. A large, glowing blue and green energy blast is crashing down on a tombstone behind her, with a large red "SLAM!!" sound effect. In the background, other tombstones and a church steeple are visible under a dark, stormy sky. Ariel is in the foreground, crouching and looking back over her shoulder at the destruction.

GREATER
THAN YOU?!

WHAT COULD
POSSIBLY CAUSE MORE
DAMAGE THAN WHAT YOU
DID?!? WHY'D YOU
DO IT???

SLAM!!

ARIEL,
SOMETHING IS
COMING FOR
YOU!

YOU AREN'T
LISTENING!!



OH I'M LISTENING.
AND I'VE YET TO HEAR
YOUR ANSWER!

IT WAS A
MISTAKE, ARIEL! IT
WASN'T SUPPOSED
TO BE THIS WAY.

WHY'D
YOU DO
IT?!?

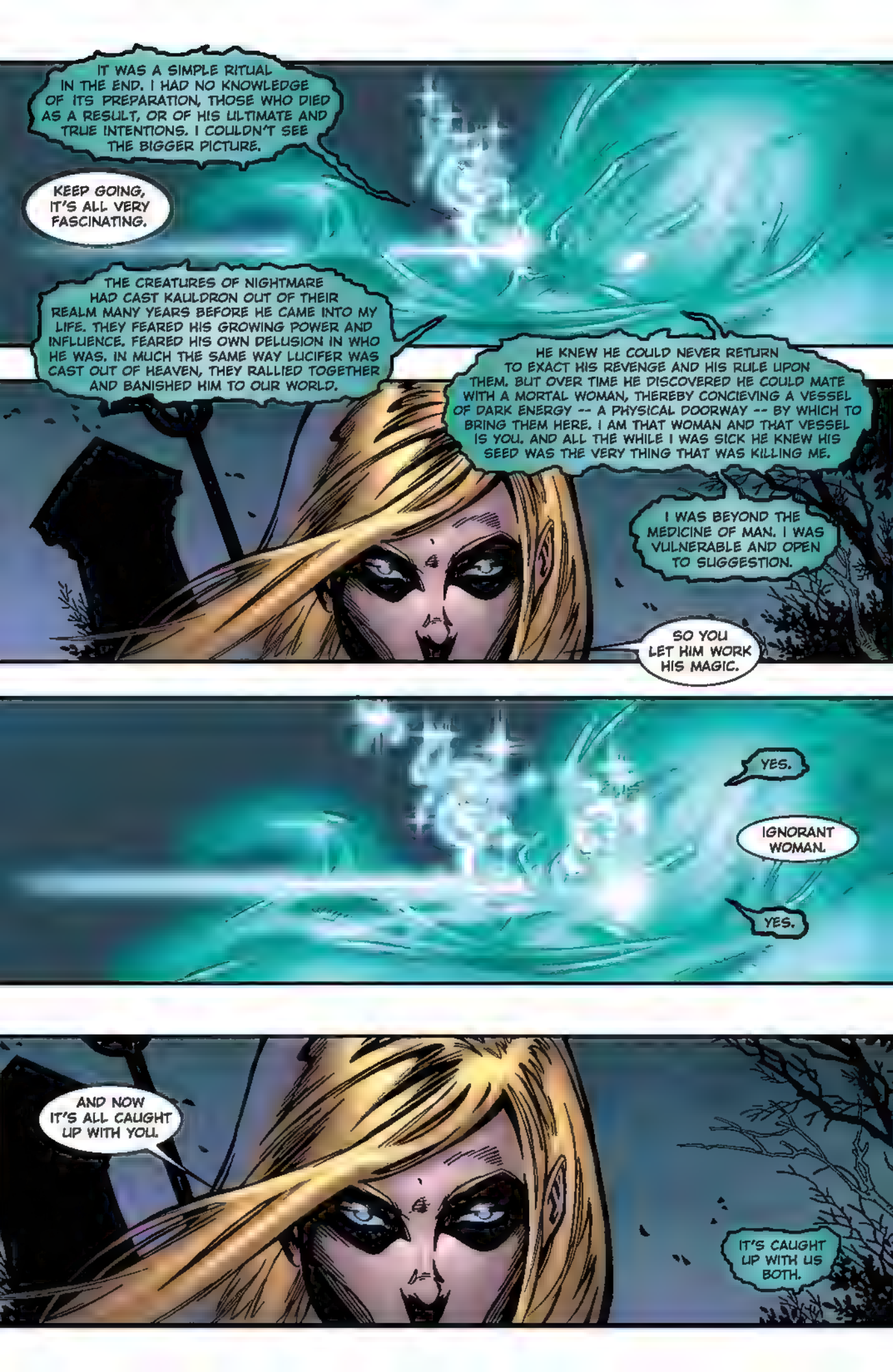
I WAS PREGNANT,
I WAS DYING AND THOUGHT
I WOULD HAVE TAKEN YOU WITH
ME, ARIEL. KAULDRON WAS A...
FRIEND... BUT I DIDN'T KNOW
WHAT HE REALLY WAS. WHERE
IT WAS HE CAME FROM.

DO TELL
MOMMY!

HE IS FROM OUR
COLLECTIVE NIGHTMARES. A PLACE
YOU NOW KNOW TOO WELL. KAULDRON IS
NOT THE DEVIL, NOT THE REAL ONE, BUT HE
IS WHO SOMEONE DREAMED
THE DEVIL TO BE.

WELL PRACTICED IN THE
BLACK ARTS, HE KNEW OF A ROAD
I COULD TAKE THAT WOULD SAVE MYSELF AND
MY UNBORN DAUGHTER. HE PROMISED ME I
WOULD LIVE TO SEE YOU GROW OLD AND
I BELIEVED HIM BECAUSE I WANTED
DESPERATELY TO.

AND ALL
THIS TIME I THOUGHT
ROBERT WAS THE
DUMB ONE.



IT WAS A SIMPLE RITUAL
IN THE END. I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE
OF ITS PREPARATION, THOSE WHO DIED
AS A RESULT, OR OF HIS ULTIMATE AND
TRUE INTENTIONS. I COULDN'T SEE
THE BIGGER PICTURE.

KEEP GOING,
IT'S ALL VERY
FASCINATING.

THE CREATURES OF NIGHTMARE
HAD CAST KAULDRON OUT OF THEIR
REALM MANY YEARS BEFORE HE CAME INTO MY
LIFE. THEY FEARED HIS GROWING POWER AND
INFLUENCE, FEARED HIS OWN DELUSION IN WHO
HE WAS. IN MUCH THE SAME WAY LUCIFER WAS
CAST OUT OF HEAVEN, THEY RALLIED TOGETHER
AND BANISHED HIM TO OUR WORLD.

HE KNEW HE COULD NEVER RETURN
TO EXACT HIS REVENGE AND HIS RULE UPON
THEM. BUT OVER TIME HE DISCOVERED HE COULD MATE
WITH A MORTAL WOMAN, THEREBY CONCEIVING A VESSEL
OF DARK ENERGY -- A PHYSICAL DOORWAY -- BY WHICH TO
BRING THEM HERE. I AM THAT WOMAN AND THAT VESSEL
IS YOU. AND ALL THE WHILE I WAS SICK HE KNEW HIS
SEED WAS THE VERY THING THAT WAS KILLING ME.

I WAS BEYOND THE
MEDICINE OF MAN. I WAS
VULNERABLE AND OPEN
TO SUGGESTION.

SO YOU
LET HIM WORK
HIS MAGIC.

YES.

IGNORANT
WOMAN.

YES.

AND NOW
IT'S ALL CAUGHT
UP WITH YOU.

IT'S CAUGHT
UP WITH US
BOTH.



NO, SEE I'M STILL
ALIVE!! I'VE STEERED
CLEAR OF THE EASY FIXES
AND I'M STILL LOOKING FOR
SOLUTIONS! YOU'RE THE
GHOST, MOTHER,
NOT ME!

ONCE I REALIZED WHAT
WAS COMING I THOUGHT MY
SPIRIT WOULD BE BETTER
SERVED WATCHING
OVER YOU.

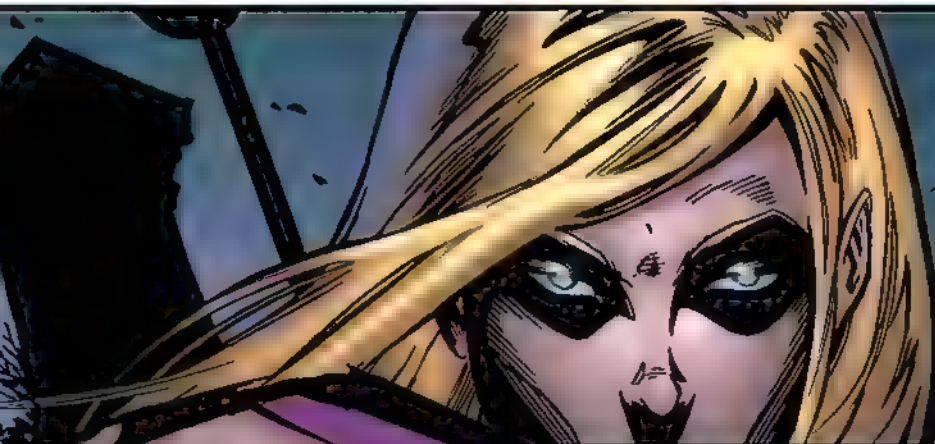
YOUR
JUDGEMENT ISN'T
SOMETHING I PLACE ANY
STOCK IN!! NOT
ANYMORE!



QUEEN
JIMMY GORDER

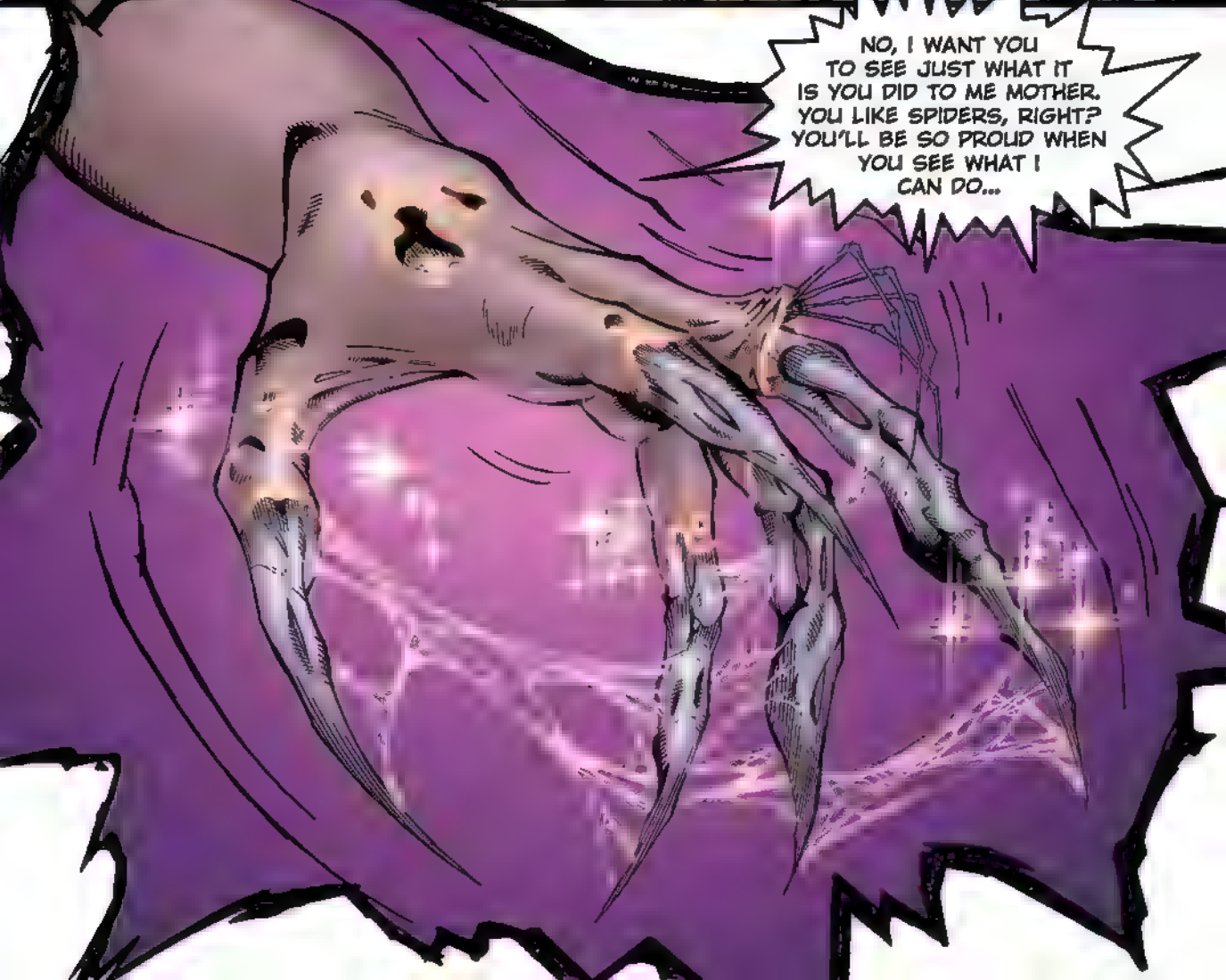


MY MISTAKES WERE
BORN OUT OF LOVE AND FEAR,
ARIEL. IN A WAY, WE WERE BOTH VICTIMS.
I DIDN'T -- COULDN'T BELIEVE THAT ANY
OF THIS WAS EVEN POSSIBLE.



OH IT'S POSSIBLE.
LET ME SHOW YOU HOW
POSSIBLE IT IS.

ARIEL PLEASE.
DO NOT SET ANOTHER
ONE FREE.



NO, I WANT YOU
TO SEE JUST WHAT IT
IS YOU DID TO ME MOTHER.
YOU LIKE SPIDERS, RIGHT?
YOU'LL BE SO PROUD WHEN
YOU SEE WHAT I
CAN DO...



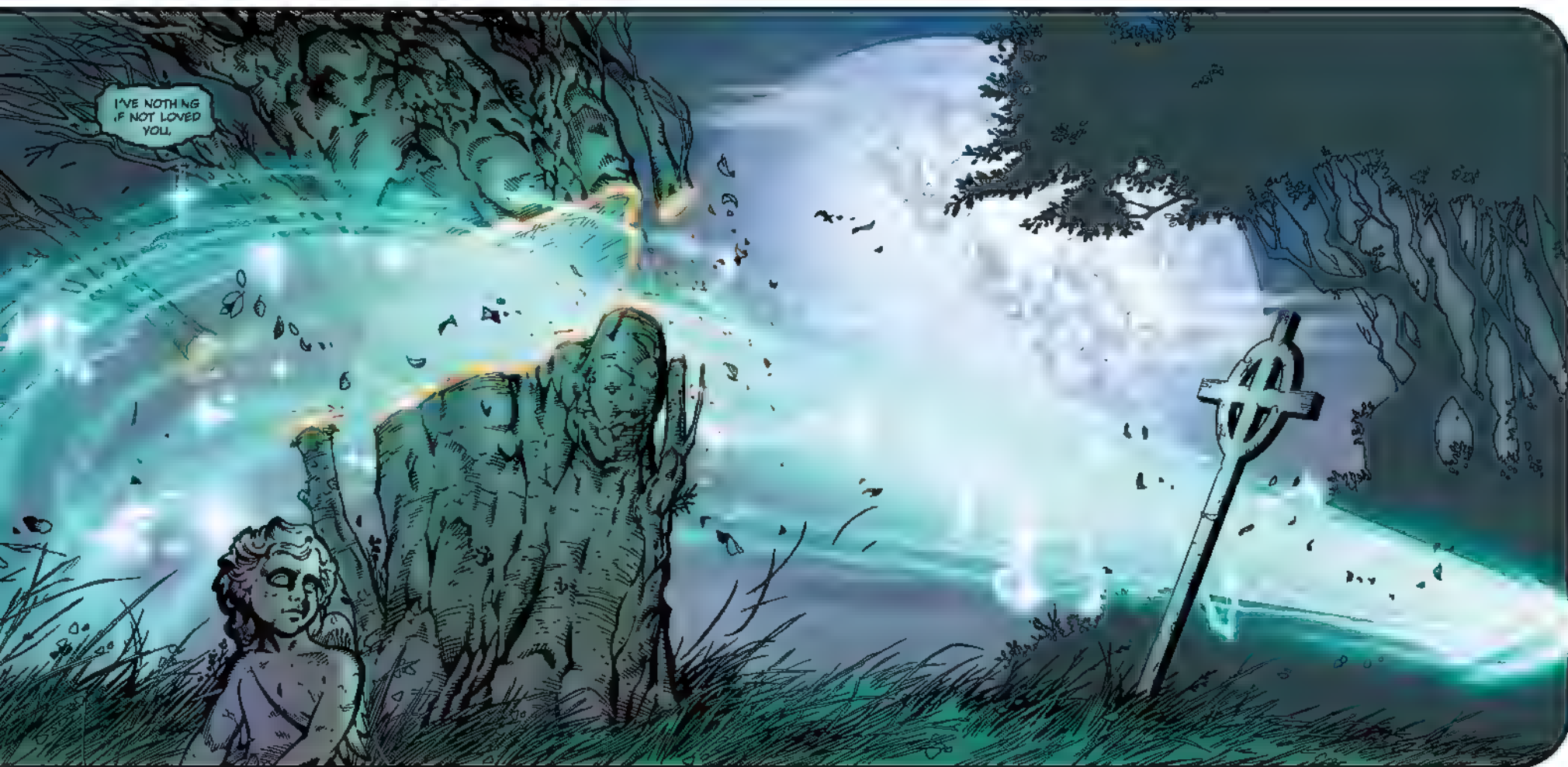
...WHAT
I'VE
BECOME!

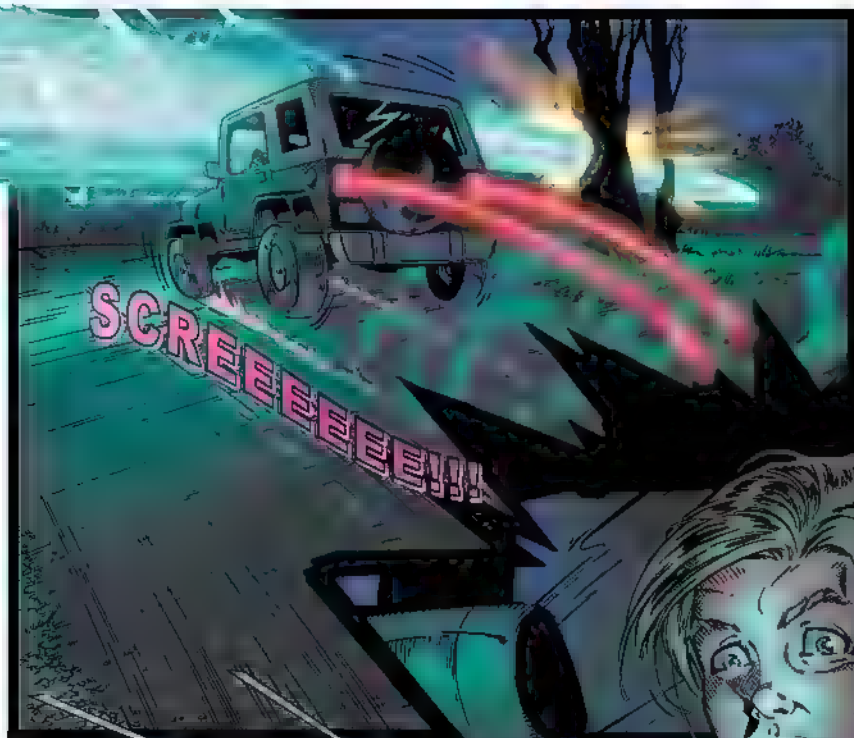
ARIEL...
NO!!!

LOOK AT
ME MOTHER AND
KNOW THAT IT'S BECAUSE
OF YOU!!! YOU DID THIS
TO ME!! TAKE A
GOOD LOOK!!!

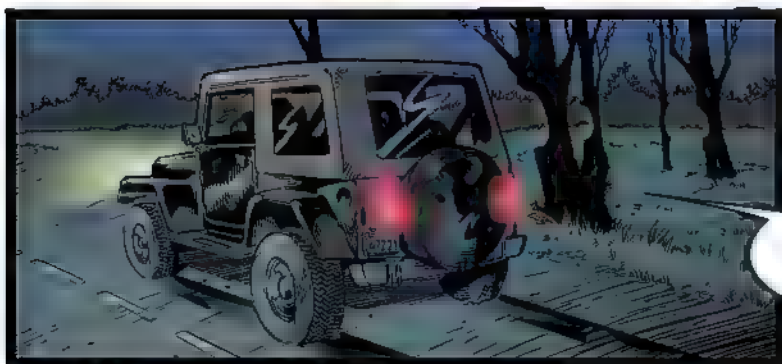
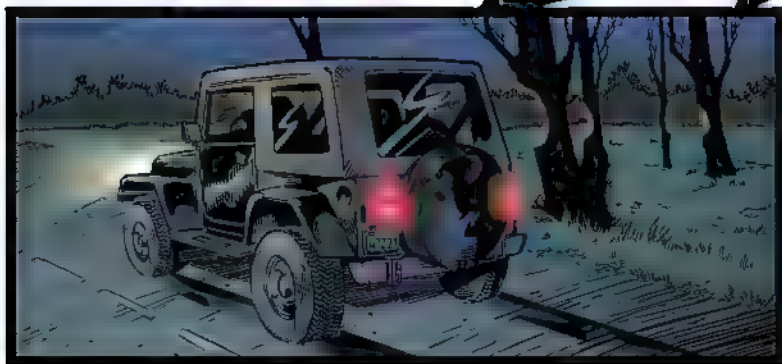
WILLIAM C. FOGARTY
1952-1999
let the world go on fire.

I'M SO
VERY SORRY,
ARIEL.

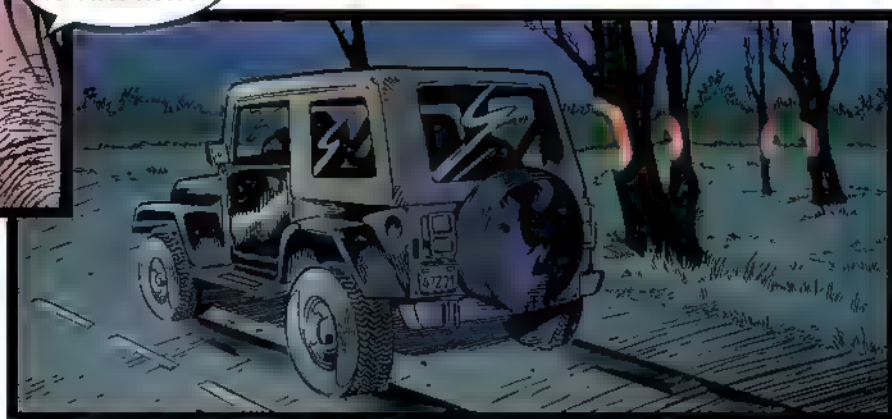
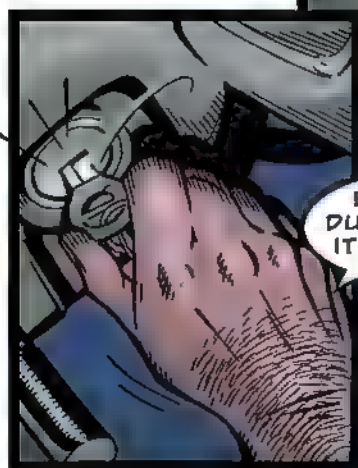
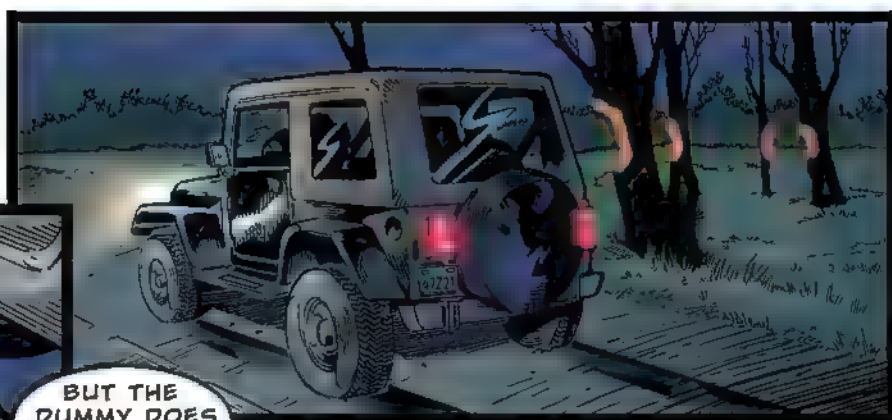




GEE--ZUS!!

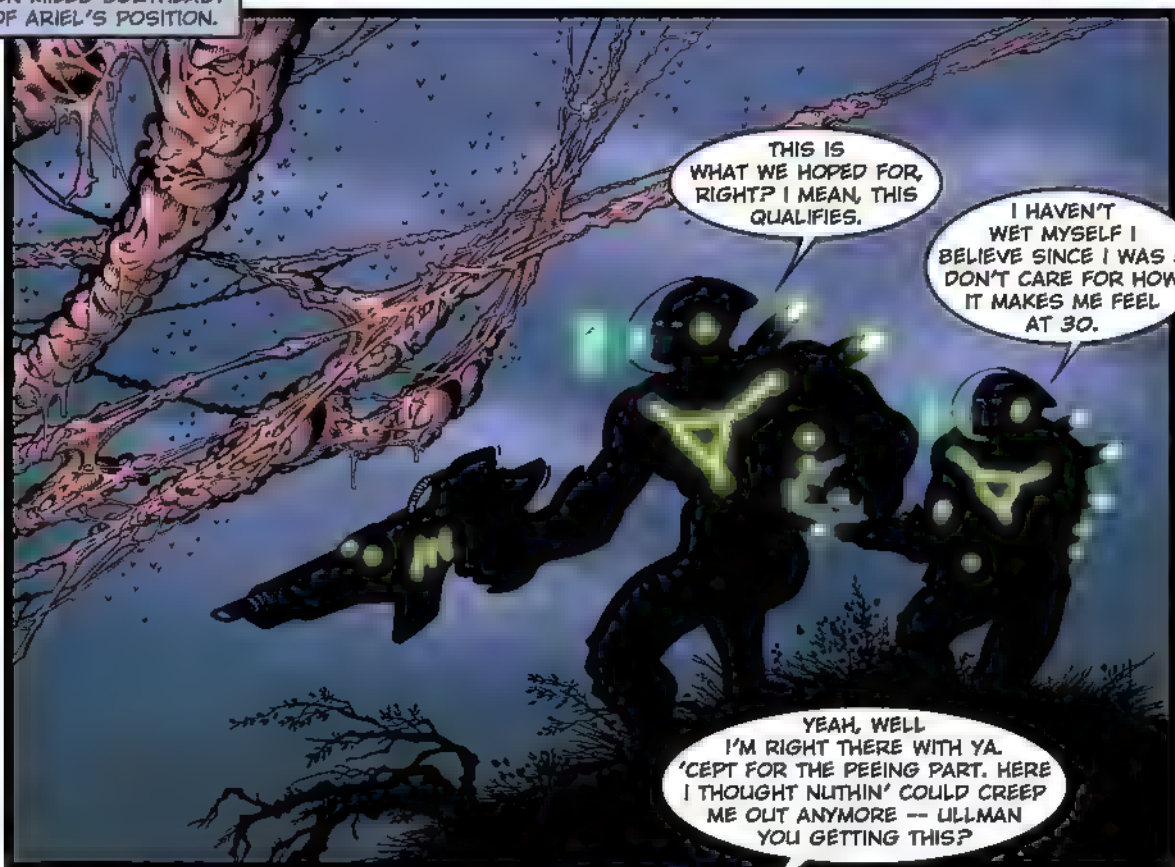


NOT EVEN HOME YET AND IT'S ALREADY STARTING.





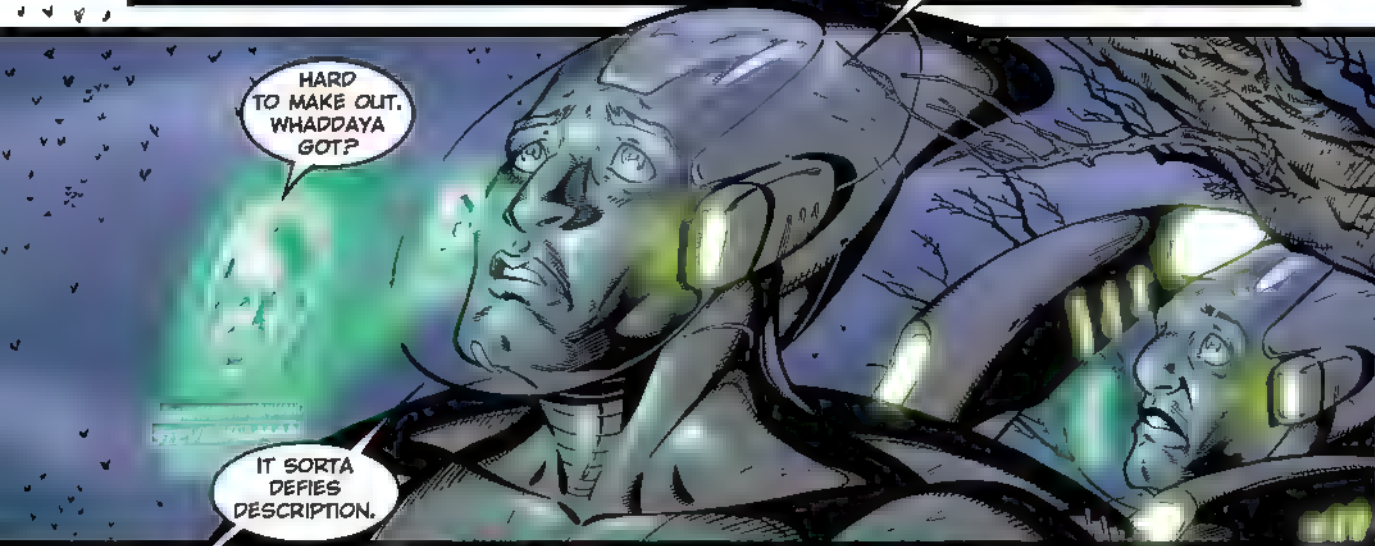
SEVEN MILES SOUTHEAST
OF ARIEL'S POSITION.



THIS IS
WHAT WE HOPED FOR,
RIGHT? I MEAN, THIS
QUALIFIES.

I HAVEN'T
WET MYSELF I
BELIEVE SINCE I WAS 5.
DON'T CARE FOR HOW
IT MAKES ME FEEL
AT 30.

YEAH, WELL
I'M RIGHT THERE WITH YA.
'CEPT FOR THE PEEING PART. HERE
I THOUGHT NUTHIN' COULD CREEP
ME OUT ANYMORE -- ULLMAN
YOU GETTING THIS?



HARD
TO MAKE OUT.
WHADDAYA
GOT?

IT SORTA
DEFIES
DESCRIPTION.

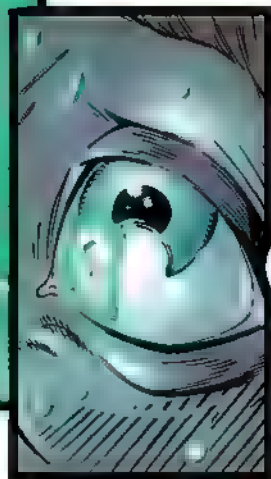
TRY MOVIN'
YER MOUTH AND SEE
WHAT COMES OUT. WE
PAY YOU FOR IT.

LOOKS LIKE THE
BIG FISH GOTTAHOLDA
THE LITTLE FISH... ONLY THIS
FISH AIN'T EXACTLY LITTLE.
AND ULLMAN?

I'M FREAKED.
I DON'T GET
FREAKED.



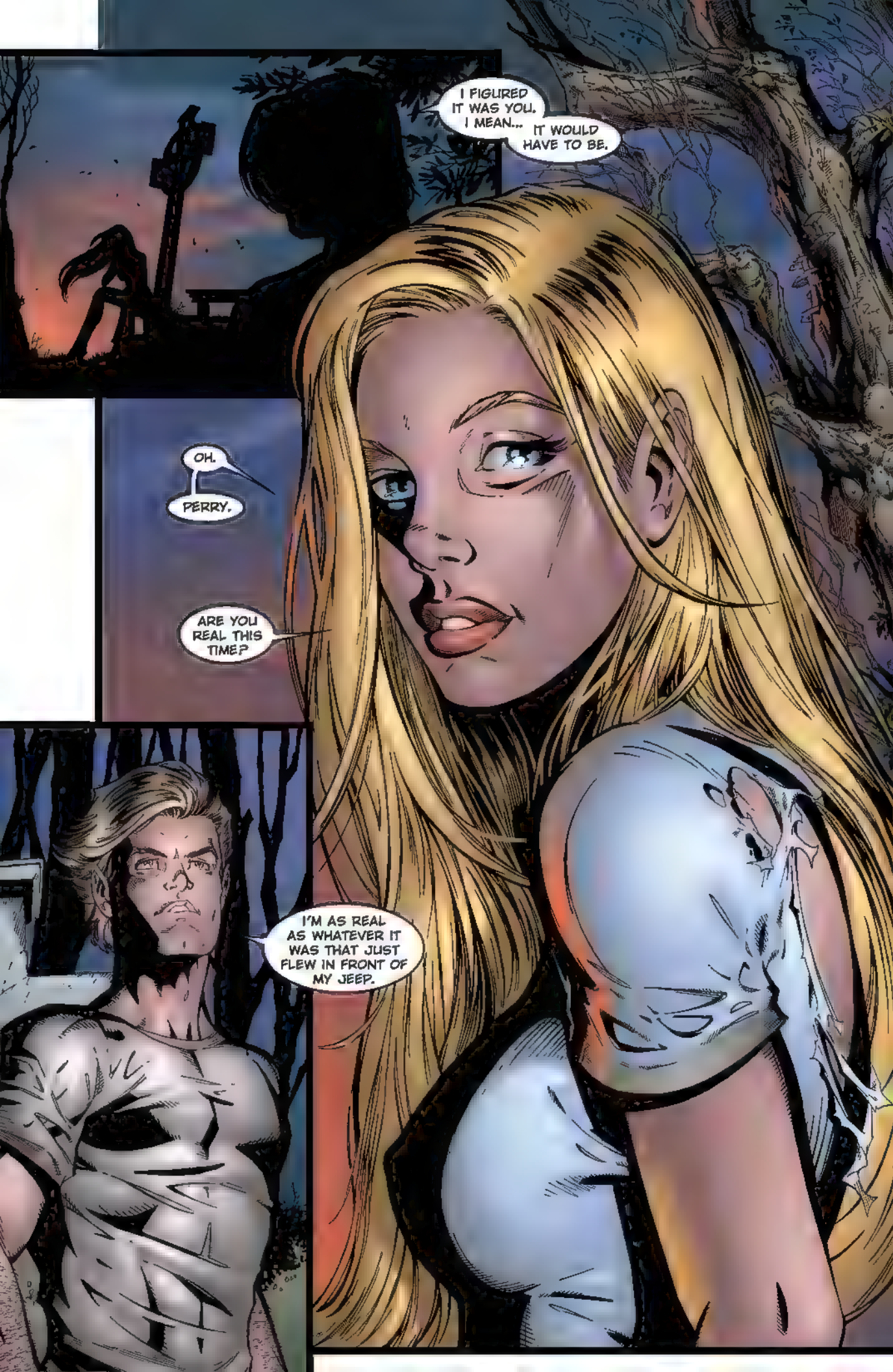
ALL IT MEANS'S
YER GETTIN' CLOSER.
THIS IS WHAT WE WANTED.
WHAT WE'VE BEEN
LOOKIN' FOR.



WELL AND
GOOD, AND I
UNDERSTAND
ALL THAT...



...BUT YER
NOT STANDING IN
FRONT OF WHAT
I AM.



I FIGURED
IT WAS YOU.
I MEAN... IT WOULD
HAVE TO BE.

OH.
PERRY.

ARE YOU
REAL THIS
TIME?

I'M AS REAL
AS WHATEVER IT
WAS THAT JUST
FLEW IN FRONT OF
MY JEEP.

A WARM WIND BEGINS TO BLOW, THE
CLOUDS PART AND FOR THE FIRST
TIME SINCE I CAN EVEN REMEMBER...

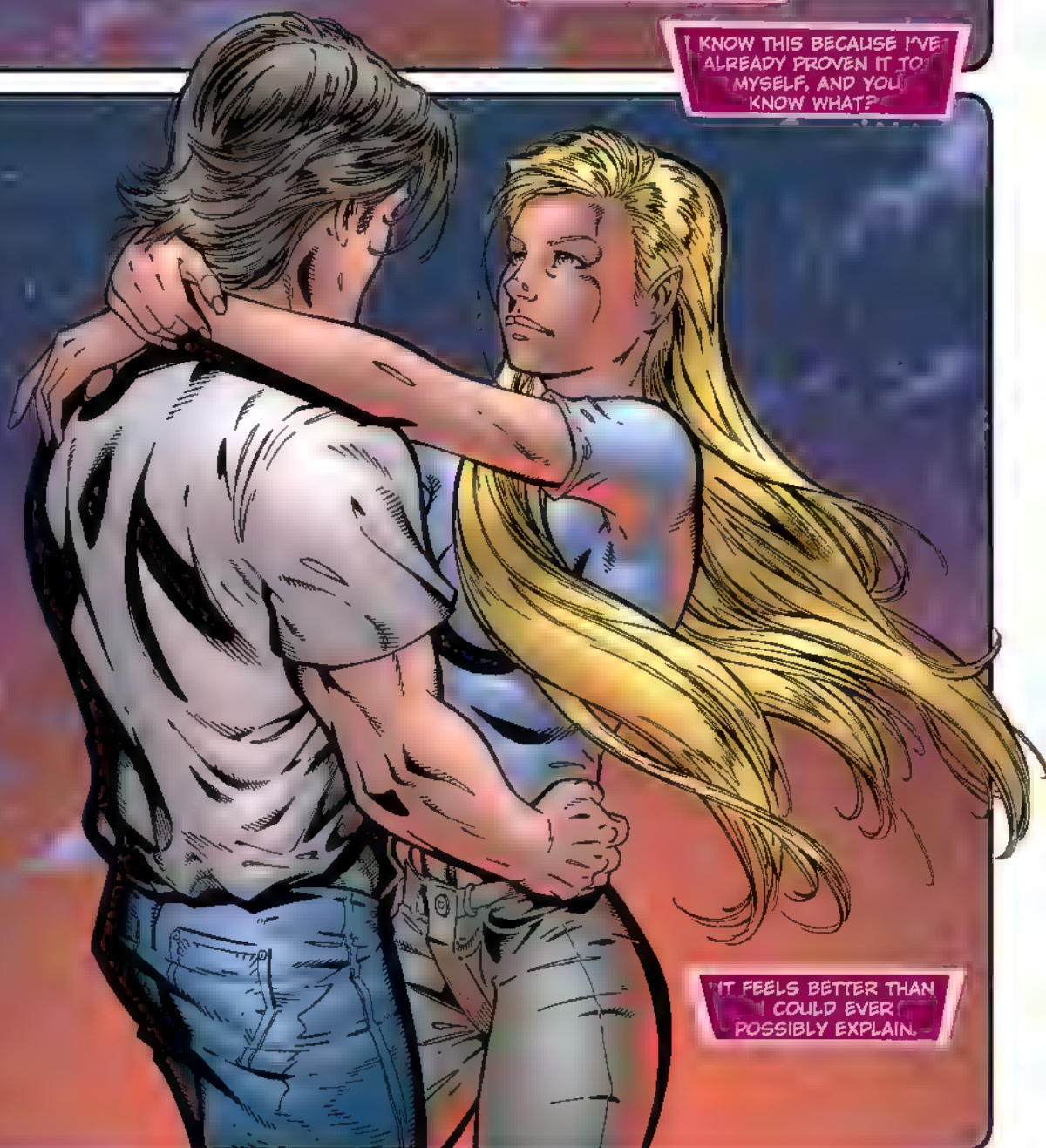
THERE ARE STARS SHINING DOWN ON ME. ON
US, STARS. I'D FORGOTTEN WHAT THEY LOOKED
LIKE. HOW SIMPLE AND BEAUTIFUL THEY ARE.

I'LL BE THE FIRST TO ADMIT THIS ALL FEELS
A LITTLE LIKE A DREAM. AND WHO CAN SAY
ANYMORE? MAYBE IT IS. MAYBE ALL OF IT
IS. BUT AT LEAST THIS TIME...

IT'S ONE THAT I LIKE, YOU'LL HEAR
NO COMPLAINTS. NOT ANYMORE.

WHATEVER COMES MY WAY,
I'LL HANDLE IT. I'LL
ENDURE. I'LL SURVIVE.

I KNOW THIS BECAUSE I'VE
ALREADY PROVEN IT TO
MYSELF, AND YOU
KNOW WHAT?



IT FEELS BETTER THAN
I COULD EVER
POSSIBLY EXPLAIN.





YOU HAVE TO
ADMIT IT'S KIND
OF SWEET.

THAT FOOL'S TIMING
COULDN'T BE MORE PERFECT.
HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT HE
JUST WALKED INTO.

LOOK, WE'VE
GOT HER DEAD TO
RIGHTS. LET HER HAVE THIS
MOMENT. THERE'LL BE
ANOTHER TIME.

WHY THE SUDDEN
RESERVATION?

I ALMOST
FEEL SORRY
FOR HER.

I DON'T KNOW,
JESSICA...

...I'M NOT SURE
THIS CAN WAIT.









ARIEL'S HAVING NIGHTMARES AGAIN



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